

2014

Beauty and the Body: Gendered Representations of the Digitally Altered Image

Lauren Prince
Scripps College

Recommended Citation

Prince, Lauren, "Beauty and the Body: Gendered Representations of the Digitally Altered Image" (2014). *Scripps Senior Theses*. Paper 395.
http://scholarship.claremont.edu/scripps_theses/395

This Open Access Senior Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Scripps Student Scholarship at Scholarship @ Claremont. It has been accepted for inclusion in Scripps Senior Theses by an authorized administrator of Scholarship @ Claremont. For more information, please contact scholarship@cuc.claremont.edu.

Beauty and the Body: Gendered Representations of the Digitally Altered Image

By

Lauren Prince

Submitted to Scripps College
in partial fulfillment of a Bachelors of Arts

Professor Jennifer Friedlander
Professor Elizabeth Affuso
Professor Nancy Macko

April 25, 2014

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	4
Foreword	5
Theoretical Frameworks of “Seeing” Images	7
Patriarchal Exnomination and the Exploration of Photographic Masculinity	28
The Female Body: Constructed and Imposed Constraints	47
Gendered Look: A Comparative Analysis	71
Afterword	87
Bibliography	89

Acknowledgements

I much as I would like to take credit for all the words and thoughts that fill up the upcoming 90 pages, I cannot do so without acknowledging and thanking the wonderful people who helped me academically and emotionally through this long, arduous, and rewarding process.

Jennifer Friedlander, thank you so much for always (without fail) welcoming me into your office with a smile on your face; your energy consistently put my mind at ease.

Elizabeth Affuso, as an external processor, this work would not have become what it is without our weekly conversations in your office. I appreciate your ability to help me articulate what I was trying to say, especially when I couldn't.

Nancy Macko, thank you for being the best cheerleader I never knew I needed.

Mom and Dad, thank you for instilling in me a sense of curiosity and a drive to learn that is not only evidenced in these pages, but will follow me for the rest of my life.

Dani Hernandez-Roach and Madison Williams, thank you for sticking around during the long hours, late nights, and my decreasing ability to speak English.

Foreword

As a Media Studies major at a women's college, it becomes almost impossible to get through a class without a discussion about the horrifying practices of digital manipulation technologies. I set out to look at the ways women are represented in images and how the pervasive use of digital alterations influenced the women seeing these photographs. As a female consumer of media, I have come to see the ways these images have not only influenced my relationship with my own body, but my relationship with other bodies.

In this work, I hope to explore how ideologies are expressed and imposed through images, and how these disseminated photos are received and internalized by a susceptible public. I will explore the theoretical aspects, which ground an understanding of the importance, value, and influence of images. Strong background knowledge of how and why photographs are assumed to depict reality helps elucidate an understanding of the emotional connections and desires viewers have with subjects in images. The relationship of the body to an image helps outline the path to an individuals' performance of a normalized identity. Without attempting to perpetuate a gender binary, I explore a generic grasp of society's stereotypical gender roles and how these ideals are depicted in images and enhanced through digital manipulation. These understandings provide a foundation to explore how these patriarchal

ideologies are disseminated specifically through active and passive readings of photographs. An understanding of how one's outer appearance is assumed to reflect the individual's internal identity explains why the body plays a critical role in the formation of gender roles. Through an in-depth comparison of the ways in which digital manipulation dictates gender representations and preserves patriarchal gender roles, one can explore how the same technological tools can be applied in completely different ways. Overall, this work aims to explore how normalized gendered representations in images are heightened through the use of digital manipulation technologies and how that influences a spectator's relationship both to the image and to their own body.

Theoretical Frameworks of “Seeing” Images

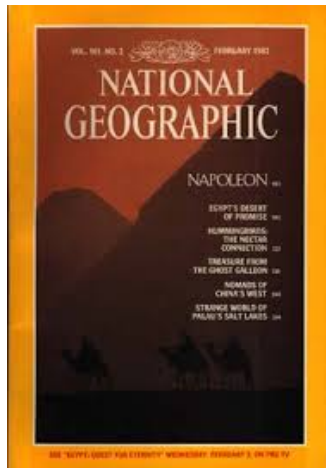
Since the dawn of photography, photos have been modified. Originally just used as another medium for art, photographers might remove buildings from backgrounds or combine aspects from a variety of different photos to create a new image altogether. This phenomenon has increased exponentially as the photographic technology has changed and become more accessible and easy to use for both professional and amateur photographers alike; technology has made photographic modifications easier to do, yet harder to detect. Throughout the history of the use of photographs, editing techniques have continually been used. Many artists would take photographs and paint over certain aspects to increase color contrast, erase background images, etc. By the 20th century, posed photos, composites, re-enactments, and highly retouched images were all commonplace.¹



In 1863, during the Civil War, several faked photos circulated including a picture that purported confederate and union soldiers, while in fact, it was one body in two different poses from different images edited into the same frame.³ In a famous legal case in the 1920s, a man went to court to annul his marriage, claiming he was unaware of his wife's mixed race heritage.



The woman was asked to lower her pants in order to prove to the court the man should have been aware of her race. While no reporters were allowed in the court, and no photographs were taken, images were in the tabloids the following day. An assistant art director collected roughly 20 images in order to create a composite image—including a showgirl, staff members posing as jurors, and others.⁵ Other faked photos included war propaganda images, photos of dictators who wanted their images to look more young and kind than they were in reality, and a composite image of Herbert Hoover and Charles Curtis (his VP) so that Hoover did not have to physically stand next to him in order to take the picture.⁶



In 1982, National Geographic published a photograph of the Pyramids of Giza on its magazine's cover. This image stirred a ton of controversy because in order to fit two peaks within the vertical frame of the image, National Geographic moved the pyramids closer together. This sparked backlash, not necessarily by digitally moving the pyramids, but because the public began to realize the possibility, normalcy, and ease of changing aspects of an image.⁹ As digital manipulation becomes more widespread and easy to use, it also becomes harder to detect. The use of digital alteration on such an iconic image in a well-known and well-respected magazine make the prevalence of this practice better known to the public.

Types of modifications include, but are not limited to, the deletion of certain aspects or parts of a photo, the modification or manipulation of aspects within the photo, the addition of other elements to the photo, or the composition of various images juxtaposed together into a single frame. As the extent to which photo editing has become more prominent, accessible, and overdone, its practices have come into the forefront. Tina Fey, a well-known and successful comedian, actor, and writer has been featured on the cover of numerous magazines. In her memoir, *Bossypants*, she explores the photo-shoot/editing process and directly expresses her own feelings toward the topic. As an

adult, she understands the value and missteps of digital correction, “Photoshop is just like makeup. When it’s done well it looks great, and when it’s overdone you look like a crazy asshole.”¹⁰ The true question now is when is it overdone and when does it look great? Why is Photoshop such an issue now when its technology has been around for decades? The answer: because we have reached a point where almost all of the photo manipulation techniques are being overdone and it’s not just making the celebrity look like a total ass, but the magazine, the media system, and society as a whole because “the amount of damage inflicted in the course of beautifying the body tends to be directly related to the development of technology.”¹¹ As technologies became easier to use and were more accessible, the extent to how they were used changed.

Prior to the invention of computers, photographic alterations were made either before or after development. Many artists retouched images with ink or paint others manipulated exposure time, did double exposures, or pieced together negatives in the darkroom. The inventors of Photoshop had been working since the first Mac came out in 1984 to develop a program to better edit photos—this quickly turned into the software we use today.¹² Since 1990, the program has been quickly adapted to various uses aside from prior computer alterations, which consisted solely of color contrast changes and quick erasures. Other programs have popped up as applications on smart phones, (Flickr, Camera FV-5, Pixlr Express, Instagram) making digital enhancements quicker and easier. This accessibility of photo editing tools and digitized image processes dramatizes and elucidates the prevalent use of photo manipulations.

Understanding the role of the photograph itself helps conceptualize why the use of photo manipulation is so problematic. Photos are a form of evidence because, “reality has

always been interpreted through the reports given by images.”¹³ Images are used in court cases to prove items were in a given location; they are used to document sporting events; they are used on gossip websites, or to prove a significant other was cheating. Roland Barthes theorized that the “photograph possesses an evidential force” because it captures reality.¹⁴ Unlike the painting, a photo catches and snapshots the real—becoming a form of documentation. Because we believe reality to be truth, the image of reality also represents truth, and because we understand photographs to be evidentiary fact, they contain elements of power. This is complicated by Barthes’ emphasis that the image appears to function as a message without a code—a denotation; when in fact, denotations are always naturalized connotations—a subjective truth. Because the photo does not actually represent the real, but viewers make that assumption, the subjective truth is mistaken for “real.” And thus, the power of an image also holds the power of the “truth”—a subjective, manufactured truth under the guise of objective fact. In this way, the image-maker (be it an artist, a mass media producer, a filmmaker, a journalist, or a politician) holds the power of what deserves to be looked at, what deserves to be seen, and simultaneously, the opposite, what is not worthy of being seen. They construct a worldview through their images. Photos influence and persuade others’ decisions and emotions, creating a normative ideology of truth. This “truth” makes viewers believe that a photograph is inherently objective, honest, and evidential.

However, even an image in its purest form is not objective because the photographer’s subjectivity frames the snapshot in terms of angle, lighting choices, and pose, “in deciding how a picture should look, in preferring one exposure to another, photographers are always imposing standards on their subject.”¹⁵ This subjectivity

increases exponentially when the image itself is altered because it imposes a cultural and personal subjectivity not just of the photographer, but also of the photo editor.

When images are altered, their power as evidence, as truth shifts – a new subjectivity is introduced. The photo, as an always-already manipulated form embeds a cultural and personal narrative into the image. Through the use of digital photo manipulation, the power of the image and the information it disseminates becomes visible, changing the image's power. Sturken argues it is the use of “digital imaging techniques in the past decade [that] has dramatically altered the status of the photograph.”¹⁶ Digital modifications have changed photos from evidence to symbols. The unaltered image is regarded as reality, truth, and evidence. However, the repetition of modified image after modified image parades under the guise of truth. Not only do subjects turn into objects, but also the viewer begins to conflate the subject with the conception or standard (beauty), “it turns people in objects that can be symbolically possessed.”¹⁷ Subjects of images now come to signify what beauty looks like, embodying, embracing, and illuminating the standard and ideology of beauty. The cultural and personal subjectivity constructs an ideology of beauty, determining that beauty is not natural, but rather requires alterations; alterations that make the “beautiful” body eternally skinny, tall, white, and young. By being on the cover of a magazine, a celebrity not only embodies the beauty ideal, but the magazine itself endorses these standards of beauty giving the definition power and value. The publishing industry as a whole makes decisions that reaffirm the dominant ideology, making popular (yet unrealistic) conceptions more tangible and relatable. Magazines assert power and individuals passively accept the ideology being distributed, “photography, in order to

surprise, photographs the notable; but soon, by a familiar reversal, it decrees notable what it photographs.”¹⁸ In determining what is notable, the photograph constructs the standards of beauty that society (and women, in particular) must abide by. The referent in the photograph is determined to be important just because it has been qualified as worthy enough to be photographed. As mentioned before, the photograph dictates who has the authority to view the image, what has the power to be seen—the connoted values of the images influence the ideologies that get read alongside the photograph. Images have power, and each new photo reinforces the hegemonic structure and ideology of beauty they embody.

Ideology is imposed, disseminated, received, internalized, and naturalized through the use of photographs and images. The image thus transfers this powerful definition of beauty invisibly through the wide circulation of these photographs. Almost unconsciously, these regulating ideologies become invisible structures of power, “normalization functions to screen out diversity and perpetuate social norms, often connected to race and gender...to create a perception of personal lack in the consumer.”¹⁹ Over time, an image’s power invisibly infiltrates the viewer’s minds without their knowledge or consent, creating an illusion of agency. These conceptions are situated within the subjective ideals of the image. I will clarify what these gendered ideals are in the coming chapters.

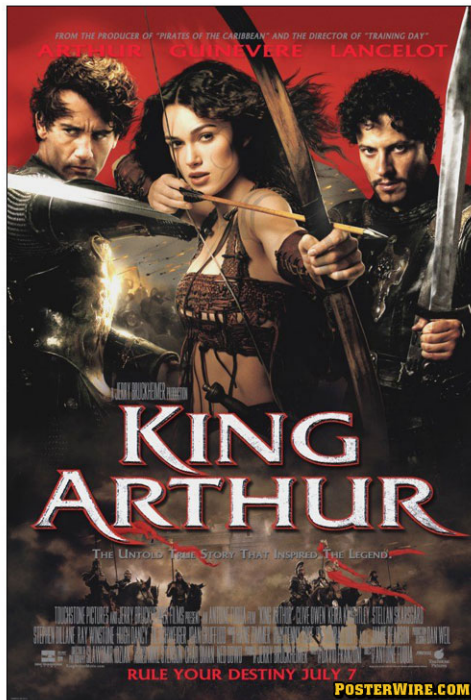
Digital photo editing uses an individual’s body against themselves, constructing and ingraining the ideology that the body is a commodity for the benefit of society—to maintain a steady flow of consumers. The coded messages expressed in these images tell the viewers that they need to buy beauty: makeup, plastic surgery, dieting plans, and gym

memberships. These ideologies have placed an inherent message within the images of beauty—forcing individuals to conform to society’s views, opinions, economic values, and visual proportions instead of allowing them to create their own agency with regards to beauty perspective. Digital photo alterations erase a subject’s identity, history, and success, and forcing them to disregard uniqueness in order to conform to society’s standards.²⁰

Every photograph according to Barthes has a referent (a subject), “the necessarily real thing which has been placed before the lens, without which there would be no photograph.”²¹ The referent, however, becomes objectified through the image. The ability of the photograph to be static in regards to time, space, and cultural ideology creates distance between the reality of that moment and the realness of the image—separating and expanding upon this distinction. By being the subject or referent of a photo, the individual loses a human element and becomes seen as *other*. By removing the subject, a sense of detachment from the viewer forms and allows for criticism and objectification, providing the viewer with power over the image and its content. It is here that the photo and the viewer’s relationship begin.

Images have so much influence because there are multiple layers that together express an invisible meaning and ideology. These layers include the semantics of the image (the subject’s pose, lighting, angles), the subjectivity of the photographer and the editor, the gaze (both male and female), the economic and political goals of the publisher (how the corporation is going to use the photo to perpetuate its goals and needs, what the company is trying to sell), and the photo’s evidential force. These messages are exposed through various facets of the image. Photographs work within a network of interactions,

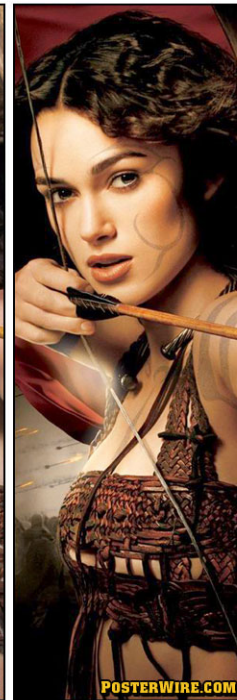
decisions, relationships, and understandings, “all images contain layers of meaning that include their formal aspects, their cultural and socio-historical references, the ways they make reference to the images that precede and surround them, and the contexts in which they are displayed.”²²



KING ARTHUR ONE-SHEET



ORIGINAL PHOTO



POSTER VERSION

23

For example, the digital manipulation of actress Keira Knightley’s body in a promotional *King Arthur* poster sends a coded message to viewers that 1) Knightley isn’t good enough on her acting skills alone, 2) her breasts need to be enhanced, implying that all women need bigger boobs to be successful and 3) that sexuality (big breasts) sells. This manipulation changes the personal, political, social, economic, and patriarchal messages of the poster that originally was just a piece of marketing material.

The elements of the photo combined with the environment, have, over time, influenced the way that images come into contact with the viewer and the way it is

received. Now that images are commonplace: on billboards, magazines, bus stop benches, freeway overpasses, storefronts, etc., the environment becomes more important because as people are walking from the bus to work, they are not necessarily actively encoding images. When images were more targeted and central to certain aspects of daily life, consumers were actively looking at these images. As a result, an image has so much influence because in certain contexts, people do not think critically about photographs, and instead view them passively. For example, many people often assume that a candid photo means the image is not digitally enhanced, censored, or modified in any way. The apathy or lack of critique in one context often leads to passiveness in other contexts. After repeated imagery of the same kinds of normalized ideals, a passive viewer subconsciously internalizes the subjective ideological reality expressed in the photograph.

Beauty, albeit culturally specific and extremely subjective, signifies power, success, and is a status symbol—one many strive for. The ideology is built on a definition of beauty as defined through the relationship of the body with society, patriarchy, and consumerism. Its power composes and creates a “truth” and “value” attached to the beauty of the female body. The ideology of beauty functions and pervades society through the body, as a site for examining how power dictates gender, “no longer deployed from above, [power] works at the micro-level of the body, through discipline rather than oppression.”²⁴ The power of the image with the power of the body is where digital manipulation becomes interesting, yet problematic. Beauty today is often and most closely associated with the body, “the body is portrayed as an imaginary site, always available to be inscribed.”²⁵ The body plays an important role in any discussion of beauty because of the direct connections between an external beauty and an internal beauty.

Additionally, the body plays a symbolic role for any spectator because it reflects “(1) the designation of social position, such as class status or gender role; and (2) the outer indication of the spiritual, moral, or emotional state of the individual.”²⁶ Bordo brings up two important aspects of the body here: that gender becomes a defining aspect and that there is a strong correlative assumption that the body (site for external beauty) reflects internal beauty. The latter identity crisis creates a divide between the identity of the persona and the way in which that individual is seen (and often criticized) by the public eye. Beauty is a social construction that explores the body’s relationship to society, power, and consumerism. Beauty is not static, but rather rooted in changing historical and cultural ideologies that saturate all aspects of society.

These ideals are imposed through digitally altered photographs to construct a normative power/value/truth. The bombardment of myriad images depicting the female aesthetic or the “macho” man creates a narrow-minded and one-dimensional view of beauty and success. The beauty ideology is built through these manifestations of “truth” and “value” attached to the body. Not only that, but these ideologies are passed off as easily attainable if you work for it, pay for it, or otherwise will it into existence. The use of photo manipulation sustains hegemonic ideologies with regards to the questions of reality, spectatorship, beauty, and gender because all of these ideologies are composited together within the frame of one image. Just like certain aspects of the body are added, deleted, enhanced, so are aspects of the images that represent ideologies surrounding the body politic. The “adding” and “altering” of the images and of the body works to naturalize the transparency of the photographic apparatus. The regulatory mechanisms, including digital manipulation techniques and technologies that determine the conditions

in which a body is considered “beautiful,” and the ways that that definition is defined reflect Foucault’s understanding of biopower, a systematic control over other’s bodies. These ideologies including the biopower of the subject and the value of the individual expressed in images are manipulated, added, deleted, enhanced, diminished through digital alterations to create a mainstream consensus of normalized and objectively “true” beauty.

These layers together create the ideology and structure of beauty. Posters and other digitally manipulated photos produce an ideological message, “images are an important means through which ideologies are produced and onto which ideologies are projected.”²⁷ An important aspect of hegemonic structures is that they appear to be natural (invisibly working within the system and disciplinary society) rather than part of an apparatus or set of visible rules, institutions, discourses that a culture produces in order to function. Ideologies are produced not just through images, but also through the use of photo manipulation techniques. These practices decide whose bodies are beautiful, what makes them beautiful, and which aspects of the body need to be accentuated, enhanced, corrected and/or lightened. Photos portray ideal beauty as a normalized ideology of how people should look, act, and perceive the world. Photos create normalizing action and behavior, a performativity of the “normative” gender, ideology, and morality, “when the relevant ‘culture’ that ‘constructs’ gender is understood..., then it seems that gender is as determined and fixed.”²⁸ The standards of sameness combined with the punishment that comes from breaking the traditional behaviors, attitude, social structures, laws, etc. serve to invisibly enforce power dynamics, “produc[ing] homogeneous effects of power.”²⁹ It is through the homogenized judgment, that the fear of being unique causes individuals to

follow the standards imposed upon them. The beauty ideology functions through the image to create one definition of beauty. The “truth” is exposed, but power operates through the image in a new way.

Viewers draw a critical perspective to photographic representations, determining how much influence each individual image possesses. By calling attention to its manipulation, a viewer’s trust in the truth and value of a photograph becomes eroded.³⁰ However, just because we lose trust in the photograph as a source of evidence does not mean that the image itself has lost its value. Even when an individual knows that an image is digitally altered, its power still holds because we don’t know exactly which parts of the photo are real, and which parts are digitally inserted. Because the power and value of the image is layered, simply exposing one layer does not remove the image’s power to construct ideologies, but it does degrade its impact. To further complicate the issue, “rather than a general strengthening or weakening of the evidential credibility of photographic images, I think we are witnessing an increased compartmentalization of credibility.”³¹ Photographs can be used in significantly different ways depending on the discourse they are used within.³² By compartmentalizing which discourses related to photographs should be taken as evidential truth and which should not be, one can rationalize that these images, even ones that are digitally manipulated, will not influence the viewer. However, just because we have the ability to compartmentalize, that doesn’t necessitate our ability to differentiate the images correctly. Because it is difficult to determine which parts of a photo are digitally generated and which are real, the human brain assumes reality through the transfer of reality from an actual body to its reproduction.³³ Thus, we often compartmentalize images of real people as truth (lacking

digital manipulations) whether or not this is the case. Understanding the uses of digital manipulation means that no assumptions regarding the reality of an image are safe; objectivity becomes misrepresented and the image loses its credibility.³⁴ Because these images are not required to be labeled, “this photo has been digitally doctored to distort or reconstruct the truth,” the viewer is stuck behind the guise of reality and continues to give photos integrity.

Compartmentalizing photos is not as easy as described for a few reasons. The first is that the context of the image often influences the ways in which images are compartmentalized is often the result of inaccuracy. A staged photo on the cover of a magazine is often perceived as digitally enhanced (even though the extent to which it is manipulated is unknown), while a candid tabloid image of a celebrity walking down the street with a significant other may be perceived as “truthful” and unaltered. The assumption of reality in candidness (whether a result of passive internalization or lack of belief that all images are altered) is cause for concern with regards to the ideologies invisibly imposed on the viewer. Separating a candid image from a staged photograph should seemingly be uncomplicated, but as almost all photographs are becoming digitally edited, it can no longer be considered “truth,” remain devoid of ideological messages, be compartmentalized easily.

Compartmentalization becomes further complicated through the digitally composited image. Placing various aspects of multiple photos within the context of one frame, allows “the photographer to put together an image not found in life.”³⁵ Photographs are considered to represent the real because they document real-life objects, experiences, locations, and people through reflection rather than resemblance (as

paintings do). Composite images then, disrupt the original assumption, while occupying a different goal—to construct a truth that does not exist. Economically, composite images are also used as a means to save tons of money in production. Without having to pay for a new photo shoot, schedule the celebrity, find the clothes, etc. many magazines will just recycle old images and compose them together.



36

For example, in 2003, Redbook magazine took a body shot of Julia Roberts from 1999 and a headshot from 2002, juxtaposing them together for a new magazine cover.³⁷ The composite photograph is a way around the system, away to avoid paying for all the costs associated with photographing celebrities. The use of composite images also raises complex issues surrounding the ownership of the body: who has the right to document the body (and under what conditions); who has the grounds to change what an individual actually looks like; just because a photo has been taken in the past, can it then be used again in different contexts; does the individual person own themselves, or is the body owned by the mass media outlets so they can use that body to construct “reality” and develop consumerism? Does a certain level of celebrity have more clout is how their body is represented in images or does the photo editor and the magazine have that power? Which identity is more “true,” that of the celebrity’s body of the image of his/her body?

Amid controversial and often undetectable uses of digital manipulation, a viewer assumes imagistic reality. The relationship of spectator to image functions through Jacques Lacan's understanding of the gaze, an anxious state that comes with the awareness that one can be viewed from the perspective of a desubjectivized object. When looking at a photograph, the viewer comes to the conclusion that he/she can be viewed in the same way that he/she is critically viewing a photograph. The act of looking at the photograph can be compared to looking in the mirror in the way that by looking at an image, you imagine yourself in that position, as a reflection in the mirror. Here, he argues that by seeing a full figure of yourself in the mirror, a sense of alienation begins to surface, "these reflections lead me to recognize in the spatial capture manifested by the mirror stage, the effect in man, even prior to this social dialectic, of an organic inadequacy of his natural reality –assuming we can give some meaning to the word 'nature.'"³⁸ This attachment to the subject, the gaze, creates a sense of "lack" within the viewer, an understanding not just of what that image entails, but that the viewer does not look the same. This comparison turns both the subject of the photograph and the viewer's body into objects. The gaze then creates desire from this lacking, pulling the spectator toward the image by means of comparison and yearning. By seeing the image of a complete body, a sense of inadequacy is realized. This act of the gaze creates a negative identification not only to the photograph, but also to the subject. Photo manipulation enhances and exacerbates the feeling of desire in the viewer by increasing the distance between reality and "reality by photograph." This distance creates a sense of alienation from nature, reality, and identity itself. It is from this sense of lacking that desire is created. Desire in this context comes from the pursuit of an elusive object that would

complete the lacking subject's hesitation between the need to fit in and the fear of being different. A dichotomy exists here, "we want both to imagine ourselves as bold, rebellious Bravehearts and to conform, to become what our culture values."³⁹ This internal struggle of individualism versus uniqueness gets at the conflicting ideologies conveyed in photographs. American culture values individualism: picking oneself up by their bootstraps, going it alone, and increased respect for those in entrepreneurial endeavors. This is complicated by the fact that many people aspire to conform their bodies to the societal standard of idealized unrealistic beauty. This contradiction between the fear of uniqueness and the strive toward originality creates an ideology of individualism, undermining the image itself. It is inherently contradictory to have an image of what all women or all men look like because there is not one way to look, rather it varies. This is at the heart of the problematic use of photographs expressing a constructed ideology that cannot be distilled to a stereotypic representation because that destabilizes the concept and inherent definition of the ideal. Reconciling the fear of being unique and the urge to be an individual agent is orchestrated within the branding of the self. Difference is only allowed as long as the individual conforms to the extent that the foundational premises of beauty, capitalism, and gender norms are not disrupted.

The individualism/uniqueness debate is also evident through the self-branding of celebrity. A celebrity simultaneously constructs themselves through their images and endorsements (following the trends of what fans like), while maintaining their elite, unique, individual identity, "stars matter because they act out aspects of life that matter to us; and performers get to be stars when what they act out matters to enough people."⁴⁰ There is an interesting balance between being a unique individual and following the

cultural trends of the day. You don't want to be so off base that you don't rally fans, but you don't want to be seen as exactly like everyone else. Celebrity branding is the structured and self created image of popular individuals including where they go, what they do, how they let themselves be seen, who they date, but also which endorsements they do, which companies they associate with, what they wear (who they wear), and what they post on their social media platforms. With regards to the photographic, branding exists within each and every image of that given celebrity—no photograph is published of that individual without it completing reflecting his/her brand identity. Everything with regards to Beyoncé's tumblr, James Franco's Instagram, Oprah's magazine (whether these images are candid or not) is indicative of that brand. The images are most likely digitally altered as well, perfectly dictated poses, a determination of which aspects of the personal will be available for public consumption, etc. A celebrity brand not only the means putting out a brand, but also protecting it. Celebrity branding also encompasses which charities you donate to, and what civil rights or political issues you advocate for. These all work out in different ways depending on PR agents, popularity of the celebrity, demographic of fan network, as well as the gender of the celebrity.

This balance of uniqueness and individuality looks different depending on the gender of the celebrity. For example, a female celebrity must conform more in the aspects of fashion and beauty than a man, whereas a man must conform more in the cultural and ideological trends of the day. The men have more room for individualism than gender conforming practices, whereas the females have more standards to conform to, and once within that realm, they can assert their individuality. Barthes' semiotic exploration of images invisibly dictates gender roles and photographic representations by encoding and

connoting ideologies that instruct men and women how to perform their genders. Judith Butler looks at gender critically and explores the ways in which gender is performative. However, she highlights how “only the feminine gender is marked, that the universal person and the masculine gender are conflated, thereby defining women in terms of their sex and extolling men as the bearers of a body-transcendent universal personhood.”⁴¹ My work however, tries to mark both genders by exploring the ways in which men and women are represented in digitally enhanced images and what that means about the symbolism, stereotypes, and future of the gender.

Images of gender reflect conceptions of ideal gender roles. The importance of the body and a more concrete definition of what these gender roles are and what they should look like stems from the ideals of Greek art: statues, paintings, the focus on the body as a site of beauty and a reflection of social class. Throughout the rest of this paper, I will look at the construction of the celebrity image through these frameworks of photographic evidence and an understanding of Western gender roles.

¹ Ibid., 18.

² Thomas H. Wheeler, *Phototruth or Photofiction? Ethics and Media Imagery in the Digital Age* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2002), 17.

³ Ibid., 17.

⁴ Ibid., 18.

⁵ Ibid., 19.

⁶ Charles Curtis and Herbert Hoover did not get along personally or professionally.

⁷ National Geographic, 1982.

⁸ <http://www.bloomberg.com/slideshow/9/2012-04-26/photoshop-blunders-manipulated-reality.html>

⁹ Ibid., 44-45.

¹⁰ Tina Fey. *Bossypants* (New York: Little, Brown and Co., 2011), 158.

¹¹ Davis, *Reshaping the Female Body: The Dilemma of Cosmetic Surgery*, 41.

¹² “The History of Photoshop,” Creative Bloq, last modified Dec. 13, 2005.
<http://www.creativebloq.com/adobe/history-photoshop-12052724>.

¹³ Susan Sontag. *On Photography*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977). 153.

-
- ¹⁴ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida Reflections of Photography*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 89.
- ¹⁵ Sontag, *On Photography*, 6.
- ¹⁶ Davis, *Reshaping the Female Body: The Dilemma of Cosmetic Surgery*, 50
- ¹⁷ Ibid., 14.
- ¹⁸ Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 34.
- ¹⁹ Ibid., 192.
- ²⁰ Wolf, *Beauty Myth*, 85.
- ²¹ Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 76.
- ²² Marita Sturken, and Lisa Cartwright. *Practices of Looking: An Introduction of Visual Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 42.
- ²³ Poster Wire, 2006. <http://posterwire.com/keiras-breasts/>
- ²⁴ Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 47.
- ²⁵ Davis, *Reshaping the Female Body*, 50.
- ²⁶ Bordo, *Unbearable Weight*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 187.
- ²⁷ Sturken and Cartwright. *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*, 21.
- ²⁸ Judith Butler. *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routledge, 1999), 12.
- ²⁹ Michel Foucault. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of a Prison* (New York: Random House, 1995), 202.
- ³⁰ Sturken and Cartwright. *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*, 21.
- ³¹ Arild Fetveit, "Reality TV and the Digital Era: A Paradox in Visual Culture?," in *Reality Squared: Televisual Discourse on the Real*, ed. by James Friedman. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 129.
- ³² Ibid., 120.
- ³³ Ibid., 127.
- ³⁴ Savedoff, *Escaping Reality*, 212.
- ³⁵ Ibid., 209.
- ³⁶ Redbook, 2003.
- ³⁷ Danielle Nicole Devoss and Julie Platt, "Image Manipulation and Ethics in a Digital-Visual World." http://www2.bgsu.edu/departments/english/cconline/ethics_special_issue/DEVOSS_PLATT/
- ³⁸ Jacques Lacan. *Ecrits* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006), 77.
- ³⁹ Susan Bordo, "Braveheart, Babe, and the Contemporary Body." *Enhancing Human Traits: Ethical and Social Implications*. ed. Erik Parens. (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1998), 193.
- ⁴⁰ Richard Dyer. *Heavenly Bodies* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 17.
- ⁴¹ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 13-14.

Patriarchal Exnomination and the Exploration of Photographic Masculinity

Digital manipulation of photos is extremely prevalent in modern society. Between the folds of publications ranging from *The New York Times* and the *Huffington Post* to *Jezebel* and *The Onion*, spectators can see .gifs of pre/post Photoshopped Lena Dunham, Taylor Swift, Jennifer Lawrence, and any other female celebrity, model, or person featured in a photograph. But no one really talks about men getting edited digitally because no one really talks about men at all. Men are an invisible dominant structure that lets everything else form in relation to it. Their exnomination is reflected in their lack of discussion is such a popular topic. Their personal and moral virtues, physical appearance, occupations, and whiteness combine to form a masculine ideal that sets a standard of normalcy for an idealized, appropriate way of life.⁴²

Patriarchy is the invisible hegemonic structures of discourse that dictate the way men and women are constructed and represented in images, as symbols, and as individuals. It is through this lens that masculinity (and femininity) is constructed and maintained. In my introductory chapter, I outlined the ways in which there is inherent power within a photographic image. Digital manipulations through technologies then exacerbate this power by signifying unrealistic expectations of what these celebrities look like and what the ideal human form should be. As I explore how images of masculinity reflect certain ideologies about society, Western culture, and the male body, it is

important to understand how these messages are received. The crucial point of meaning, power, influence, and ideology is made at the intersection of producer and consumer.

These culturally dictated subjectivities are supposed to reflect the needs and desires of the audience; but in fact, they impose needs and desires onto the consumers. Consumers then internalize these subjective ideologies, creating a new site of meaning.

The cyclical relationship of meaning, ideology, and power comes out as a result of the over-enforced characteristics that intensify as digital photo manipulation becomes more prevalent and its technology more accessible. Ideals are put forth in images, and these traits are amplified through digital alterations. These hyper-masculine ideals are internalized and encoded, shifting slightly upon appropriation. The meaning does not end when a spectator views the image, but rather the gap closes as the spectator affirms these subjectivities and reinvisions their own, perpetuating the production of these types of images. A cycle begins where the spectator encode produced material, the spectator reappropriates the imposed it assumes spectators want and continue to produce specific ideologies with patriarchal undertones. Henry Jenkins, a media scholar, calls this cycle convergence culture, “where old and new media collide, where grassroots and corporate media intersect, where the power of the media producer and the power of the media consumer interact in unpredictable ways.”⁴³ Where the mass media impose ideologies and where the audience receives and embodies these conceptions. It is here that meaning is made, constructed, embraced, inflicted; it is a site of endorsement and proclamation as well as frustration and objectification. When a spectator passively or actively engages with an image, an ideology expressed within the photograph translates from the mode of production to the consumer. The subjective nature of the image, as explored in my

introduction, meets the subjective spectator and these expected ideologies are met with insistent dialogues. The meaning of the image shifts as it is received, the ideology becomes rearticulated within the context of that individual. Patriarchal ideologies function so well because they construct a system from above, while simultaneously working within the cycle. Jenkins explores the fact that “each of us constructs our own personal mythology from bits and fragments of information extracted from the media flow and transformed into resources through which we make sense of our everyday lives.”⁴⁴ Media producers are then responding to these consumers’ actions or inactions, behaviors, and rearticulations.⁴⁵

However, convergence culture only gets us halfway there. Where Jenkins goes wrong (or isn’t quite there yet) is that there isn’t really a reception of ideals and ideologies (in the form he explores) that are perpetuated through images because it’s a medium that seems irrelevant and invisible in today’s era of new technologies. Academia is so focused on television, film, and the Internet, that we’ve forgotten that the issue stems from the original images (stereotypes and ideologies) themselves. New technologies that influence current mediums are discussed at length with regards to film and television, but not for images. For examples, there is extensive literature on the ways special effects in film are changing the way spectators interact with narratives and with the medium itself.

Similarly, Jenkins understands convergence as the site where mass media and consumer culture (fandom) meet, but there isn’t really a “fandom,” as Jenkins articulates it, for images. There is a consumption of these images as content, but there isn’t really a discourse surrounding the images themselves. Discourses surrounding other mediums are

about both the medium and the content and how they work together to express ideologies. With regards to photographs, there is a discourse around the content of the images, but not of the medium itself. As a result, viewers often take content at face value without thinking about what the photograph is and how it is transferring ideologies, and can act upon the viewer. There is no discussion about the way images are read—that is what I aim to explore in this work. Especially with regards to male representation in photographs, the reception of which is never criticized nor made visible.

Once mass media finds something that works, they stick to it until it stops working, instead of continually trying to find the best way to define and represent masculinity. As a result, there is usually one masculinity represented within popular culture—the hypermasculine, taut, and buff man with strong jaws, bushy eyebrows, and 6-pack abs. By representing this image as ideally masculine, society is not only *otherizing* men who do not fit this category, but disregarding the fact that “masculinity of individual men is itself plural.”⁴⁶ A man does not have identity, but rather context change that. For example, one man can simultaneously be a father, a professor, a boxer, and an alcoholic—but depending on the environment observers only sees one of those masculinities.

Leonardo DiCpario is an example of this singular masculinity and mode of reception. Personally and professionally, he has been fawned over by women for decades—ever since his role in *The Titanic*. He has not only been praised for his superior acting skills, but for his good looks, genuine charm, moral compass, and an overall unapologetic nature—aspects of the ideal man and an ideal society. Leonardo DiCaprio (or ‘Leo’ as he is affectionately called) reflects the traditional notions and stereotypes that

a ‘real man’ should possess—a white, lean, taut, muscular man with an “assertively narrow and straight-lined body shape.”⁴⁷



His universal appeal also stems from the way he is presented in photographs, projecting both strength and restraint, just as the ideal physicality of man should be.⁴⁹ The ideal of Western culture as a whole stems from the Greeks’ model of Western art and art culture and a strong emphasis on the body as reflective of power, righteousness, and strength.

This masculinity becomes hypermasculine through the use of digital photo manipulation. After sorting through the lack of pre/post Photoshopped male celebrities there were certain commonalities I noticed apart from the usual and common practice of evened skin tone: a more defined/pointy jawline, a thinner nose, bushier furrowed eyebrows.⁵⁰ These men, already convincingly physically, morally, and ethically masculine, were enhanced and made to be more masculine through the practices of digital manipulation. This is caused from a cyclical internalization of masculinity by an audience, which got reaffirmed and reappropriated into stronger jawlines and slimmer noses. It is these specific traits that are added to the laundry list of what a “real man” needs to be and to have—use power tools, don’t get emotional, don’t drink wine, don’t

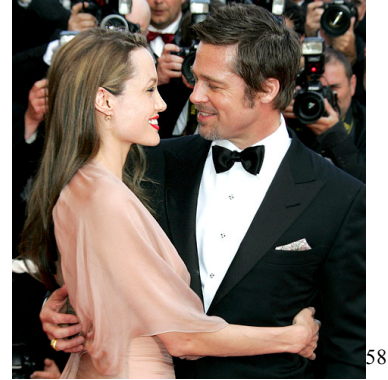
ask for directions, drive fast cars, are macho and strong, etc. Through these images, Western society has come to understand that a strong man is only strong if he has the hypermasculine physical traits represented in photographs.

Physically fit bodies (but male bodies, in particular) are status symbols of wealth and strength.⁵¹ They represent wealth because it takes money to be beautiful. In our never-ending consumer culture, one must buy beauty products, gym memberships, exercise and vitamin supplements, and even cosmetic surgery. Masculine strength resides in the symbolism of the male chiseled body—the 6-pack abs, the area commonly referred to as the “v-line,” and the defined biceps. These traits have also come to symbolize not just physical strength, but moral strength, and not just individual strength, but a collective national strength, “the male body was thought to symbolize society’s need for order and progress as well as middle class virtues such as self-control and moderation.”⁵² A body symbolically reflects outer wealth as well as inner wealth, strength, and moral behavior—a symbol not just of men, but also of a good society. Thus, one can pretty easily draw the conclusion that a strong nation can be articulated by the strength of its notoriously popular male celebrities. Evidenced through celebrities such as Leonardo DiCaprio and Brad Pitt, who represent both national and international symbols of fame, moral uprightness, and generosity; their strength and ethical stature reflects that of the United States to such an extent that professional success is irrelevant. A national identity is built on a collective understanding and moral code; this imagined community is constructed by those in power by excluding certain identities, while including others. A strong man represents a strong nationhood; oppositionally, a weak man signifies a weak society.⁵³

Because of this, we only see images of strong men—the American masculine nationality is represented, disseminated, and internalized through photographs.

The masculine construction of the body is an invisible dominant structure that lets everything else form in relation to it. Personal and moral virtues, physical appearance, occupations, and whiteness combine to form a masculine ideal that sets a standard of normalcy for an idealized, appropriate way of life.⁵⁴ Hegemonic constructions of masculinity legitimize the modern patriarchal discourse. Power is “socially constructed through practice absorbed from and fostered in institutional surroundings; opportunities for subjective and psychological identification; and encoded, archived, debated, and appeal to discursive constructions of ‘manliness.’”⁵⁵ The invisible construction of the ideal man makes the site of meaning between the producers and consumers concealed as well—exnominating the idealized notion of masculinity. Pervasive digital image alterations becomes so problematic because the images perpetuate and amplify the ideal man at a site of meaning where consumers are not be active consumers, but rather passive observers. Additionally, because the existence of digital manipulation of male subjects is invisible, this passivity encodes the patriarchal narrative more deeply into the subconscious, making the cyclical nature of stereotypic masculinity insidious. The prevalence is not part of the popular discourse (despite a large discourse of the use of digital manipulation techniques and technologies) because men are not part of the popular discourse at all; their hegemonic power is validated through its inconspicuousness. The construction of a “real man” is naturalized and encoded into our brains through repeated unconscious exposure throughout one’s lifetime from institutionalized power. Once these ideologies are internalized, they become damaging, as they are even deeper into the

unconscious and even more hidden. These turn into stereotypes that dictate how one is perceived, received, worked with, talked to, and respected.



There are four main aspects of the ideal man: physical appeal and sexiness (as previously defined by Leo), philanthropic tendencies and political activism, a family man, and professionally successful. A hallmark example of this ideal is Brad Pitt. He is well loved because his acting abilities are incredible, he is a sex symbol (despite his age), a humanitarian, and a father—he is not only the ideal man, but the ideal American man. He represents the peak standard because all men should strive to be wealthy, have a loving family, be beautiful and successful, and most importantly have white skin. These ideals are depicted in every circulated image of Brad Pitt: each image of him taking his children to get ice cream, each image of him and his wife on the red carpet, each image of him at the beach. To think these images have not been digitally enhanced, even as candid as they are, would be a grave mistake. Already a sex symbol, photo manipulation defines his features to make them even more present, exposed, and demarcated. Despite this, his symbolic masculinity goes unnoticed. This is a result of the fact that these masculine ideals and patriarchal ideologies are so deeply ingrained within each citizen. These stereotypes present strong representations that “colonize the mind and imagination.”⁵⁹ The infiltration of these social constructions not only creates these stereotypes, but

continually uses them to simultaneously maintain the patriarchy and to function within the patriarchy.

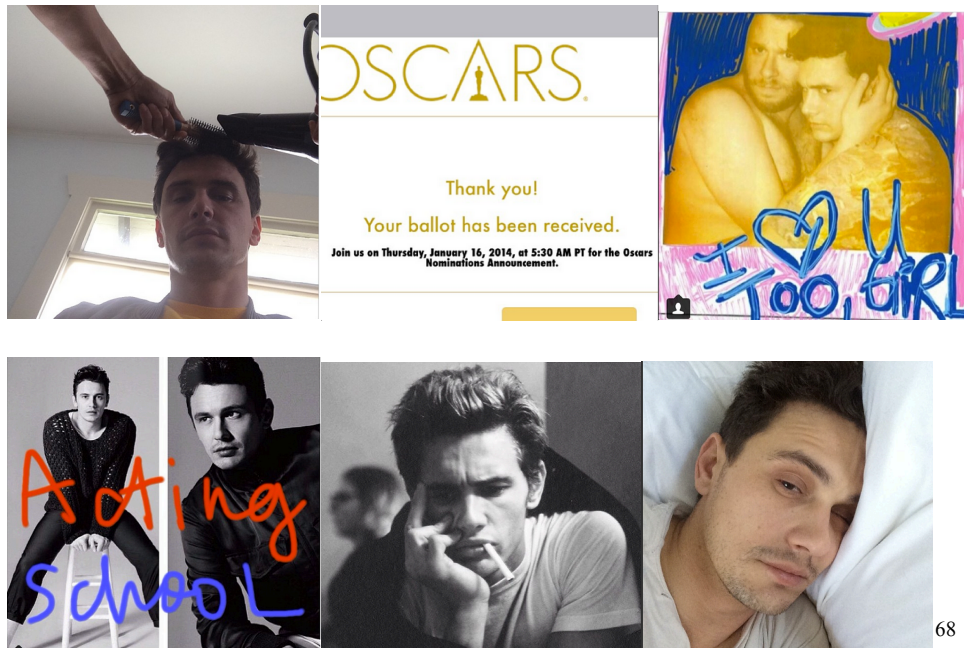


Leo was nominated for Best Actor in the 2014 Academy Awards for his lead role in *The Wolf of Wall Street* (and four other times in his career). While he has yet to win an Oscar for his stellar acting capabilities, he is still considered a celebrity heartthrob by men and women alike. The morning after the Oscars, an article floated around the Internet called, “Why it Doesn’t Really Matter at all that Leonardo DiCaprio Didn’t Win an Oscar.” In this text/meme based relic (as is typical of pop culture articles), comments such as “does he really need an Oscar? No, because he’s already a chiseled statue himself,” “look at his perfectly groomed goatee and brushed back hair and his wonderfully furrowed brows and chiseled side profile,” “He’s already a winner” surfaced.⁶¹ The presence of this article, the images of Leo’s body, and the photo captions reflect how the audience has interpreted the ideal masculinity and internalized, reinforced, and reappropriated it. His physical appearance was strong enough to withstand not winning an Oscar; his acting ability and professional capacities do not

matter because fans at home and abroad will continue to love his body. The site of meaning therefore is dependent upon the context and environment in which Leo is being viewed: he is not being viewed as an actor, but as a male body. The images of him are a site of awe and desire—these emotions are where meaning is created. A sense of desire often leads to specific motivations, articulations, and expectations both of other male celebrities as well as friends, family, and self, “the stereotype of true manliness was so powerful precisely because unlike abstract ideas or ideals it could be seen, touched, or even talked to, a living reminder of human beauty, of the proper morals, and of a longed-for utopia.”⁶² Spectators feel strongly about the content of images because there is an inherent comparison between the physical body and the represented image. The link helps us “to impose and implant such definitions of ourselves as fit more easily the descriptions of the dominant and preferred culture.”⁶³ Because the ideal seems so realistic and attainable, the desire to be a version of naturalized masculinity stays strong. This fine line between awe, attainability, and desirability keeps the spectator stuck within the confines of patriarchal one-dimensional maleness. This voyeurism and spectatorship is where meaning is constructed. A viewer internalizes the “culture of intrusive images.”⁶⁴ These fantasies and desires turn the viewer into a voyeur.

Despite changes in how masculinity has been depicted over the years, “manliness and what it stood for hardly varied, always reflecting society’s traditional values.”⁶⁵ Currently, 21st century masculinity is beginning to shift away from a one-dimensional Greek God-esque body and into a more multi-faceted, everyday conception. As the shift to exposing and representing other masculinities begins to take place, we begin to also see the multiple within one individual. The public is beginning to get a “sense of the

differentiated production of masculinities across a range of discourses,” and this “has additional implications for how we conceptualize masculinity as it is lived by men.”⁶⁶ The multi-dimensional masculinity still only exists within a white masculinity because formations are dependent upon structures of power.⁶⁷ The power of whiteness must reign true above all else, and as a result a multi-dimensional white man does not invade power dynamics in the same way that a multi-dimensional person of color would.



James Franco exemplifies the multi-dimensionality of white masculinity through his Instagram photos because he is sexy, has a physically fit body, and is intelligent, successful, and white. The images he puts forth on his Instagram reflect not only ideas of traditional masculinity, but homosexuality as well; they depict a celebrity’s backstage lifestyle, awards he has won and articles published about his work, pictures of him in bed about to go to work, memes of himself, and candid photos of him with other celebrities.⁶⁹ At first glance it might seem as though he is all over the board, but that is his purpose. James Franco is not just an actor, he is a friend, a grandson, a poet, a writer, an actor; he

has heroes, people he looks up to, he makes fun of himself—and in these senses he is also an average man. His photos play into stereotypes that one might not originally associate with him. For example, a group of his photos show his relationship with Seth Rogan: they could be construed as a bromance, but it could also be interpreted as a homosexual relationship. He has photos of himself in a James Dean-esque resemblance. Some of his images perform a homosexual identity; as a result his personal identity and celebrity brand challenges and complicates the one-dimensional heterosexual masculine ideal. A selection of his photos show his backstage life, getting his makeup done and his ability to vote for the Oscar winners. Another selection shows his relevance in today's world—images of Shirley Temple Black and Philip Seymour Hoffman—who passed away within the past month.

Franco's multiplicity reflects any man's multiplicity; he is raw and candid, and his various masculinities depend on context, environment, and mood. However, he has also purposefully done so broadly enough so that anyone (male or female) can feel connected to his life. That's his brand. And he doesn't include pictures of himself with women, potential girlfriends or boyfriends so as to push away a fan base. Franco's performative Instagram identity is lost of most of his viewers—as they take the images he posts as evidence of his real life. While Franco has embraced a current social media presence, and a multifaceted exposure to his personal and professional life, he has only been able to do so because of his whiteness. This whiteness, while remaining exnominated, allows him the privilege of a multi-dimensional manhood that is not available to others.

One dimensionality means that dominant ideology is always constructed in relation to an *other*. The construction of the *other* is an exclusionary practice that reinforces binaries. *Othering* and exnomination is how a masculine hegemony was created, and why it can remain undetectable. The *other* is the one that has to assert themselves into a public discourse in order to best call attention to their presence as a group of valid males, deconstruct a stereotype of themselves, and create a positive assertion of validity, power, and sameness. The “dominant versions of masculinity are sustained by dominance over other masculinities as much as by the exclusion and dominance over femininity.”⁷⁰ The *other*, then, consists both of the feminine and of the non-white, taut, wealthy, and strong man. The popular images repeatedly depict the masculine ideal over any sort of representation of the male *other*. Despite a lack of pictorial representation, these *other* men are still ‘real’ not being included in the construction of hegemonic masculinity.

Othering is what maintains the patriarchal dominance, “the structuring principle of the popular in this sense is the tensions and oppositions between what belongs to the central domain of elite or dominant culture, and the culture of the periphery.”⁷¹ The specific central pressures and disputes between popular cultural and peripheral cultural are race, class, and age. With these issues come an obvious dominant race (white), class (upper), and age (youth) and every other group falls subversive to that. Excessive wealth is a measure of a good man because he can contribute positively to the economy. Youth is seen as ideal “fashionable” trend put forth by the industry to improve consumption habits within the economy. Third, whiteness is a category of dominance over every other thing—used to maintain hegemonic structures and keep certain people in power. The

excessive over-presence of white men in positions of political and cultural power gives off, “an exclusively white [heterosexual] masculinity in which the attributes of an assertive independence and a youthful modernity figure prominently.”⁷² This whiteness, youthfulness, and wealth is constructed through the dominant cultural industry’s influence and ability to constantly rework and reshape what they represent by selection and repetition of images.⁷³ Beauty culture is one example of the cultural industries that are defined in terms of hegemonic and structural whiteness. The invisibility of white masculinity is totalizing, and the repeated images infer and impose the undetectable recognition and “confirmation of the [masculine] ideology of the status quo.”⁷⁴

A strong emphasis on whiteness is taken from the conception of America’s national identity because cultural dominance is constructed in terms of national iconography. Despite our best efforts, race (whiteness) has an important construction of Americanism, even when this no longer becomes true.⁷⁵ As a result, white males are typically selected to represent masculinity in each and every beauty photograph. When men of color are selected, their physical features resemble qualities of whiteness. Despite skin color and ethnic background, the subjects always have of a certain physical look. Even still, digital photo manipulations enhance the same features: a strong jawline, a thinner nose, bushier eyebrows, whiter complexion, and deeper eyes. The men portrayed in magazine, billboard, and advertisement images already have these qualities. Digital photo practices manipulate, accentuate, and further perpetuate these ideals. While these edited elements are changed on both white men, and non-white men’s images, the men are not denaturalized, but rather enhanced and made to look stronger, whiter, and manlier.⁷⁶ Additionally, out of thirteen images of before/after images of digitally

manipulated men's faces, two were men of color (both black skinned). It is these types of articles and their lack of representation that also contribute to the normalization of whiteness in imagistic representations.



Otherized men, however, remain one-dimensional. For example, Jackie Chan, a well-known Chinese actor has acted and directed numerous films—all with him doing martial arts. He has been type-casted into certain roles that constrain his identity to a singular masculinity because, “the codes of casting, dress, posture, expression, lighting and setting taken together work to produce a distinctive version of masculinity across imagery.”⁷⁸ Jackie Chan does not play romantic leads, rather he follows a “traditionally Asian path” of strong physical fitness, mental agility, and focus (without fun). This identity has now become a symbolic stereotype for other Asian men. His personality and his roles along with his personal and professional image have blended together so much they are interchangeable to the consumer. Jackie Chan, the actor, is a martial arts guru and Jackie Chan, the individual is also a martial arts guru.



Men of color, such as Denzel Washington and Will Smith, still resemble the strong physical qualities of white men (or have been made to look that way through digital manipulation).⁸¹ They have strong jawlines and slim masculine figures. Their roles have shown off these traits. They have potentially been made to look or be perceived as less threatening. They are still being inherently compared to white men and it could be argued are only getting talked about because they physically resemble whiteness. Men of color whose bodies do not fit the white masculine ideal, rarely get mentioned in popular narratives, rarely get cast in films, rarely find their pictures in magazines—an inherent form of *otherizing* that constructs presence through absence.⁸² Looking at the variety of roles these men of color have played, some do not necessarily fit either of the previously explored masculinities (one-dimensional or typecast), rather these roles *othered* because as men of color, they do not represent the ideal normalized masculinity. Javier Bardem, for example, played the villain in *Skyfall* and *No Country for Old Men* and the love interested in *Eat Pray Love* and *Vicky Christina Barcelona*; as a villain he is already an established *other*, there is no need for any further *othering* based on race, and as a love interest for films with strong female central characters, he was also considered an *other* partly because of his racial identity.

Similarly, these marginalized masculine groups are constructed in opposition to the traditional ideal. This opposition is invisible and inherent and plays a dual role: to maintain hegemonic structures of white, lean men in power, but also as a means of defining themselves in opposition to the other.⁸³ By not only constructing a comparative binary, but by making it a positive/negative one, automatically validates the power of dominance. Patriarchy, as defined in the “system of society or government in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it” – this definition constructs the *other* within it, evidence of the hegemonic power structures working within the patriarchy in order to maintain it. Over the past decade, the patriarchal system of indiscernible moral and ethical implications, and language habits have become more visible thanks in part to the feminist movement, but who and how the ideologies are being received is mostly lacking in a public or academic discourse.

Because masculinity is the dominant hegemonic group, it uses its political, cultural, social, and economical power to define everything else in exclusion to itself. The ability for the masculine ideal to remain so inconspicuous, while still reaping all the benefits of power is due to its exnominated status. Masculinity hides itself in order to naturalize its identity and maintain its hegemony. Because of this, it is difficult to articulate exactly what the ideal masculinity is and how its imagistic representations continue to perpetuate a hegemonic discourse. While digital manipulation is a popular discussion surrounding the female body, a discussion of the use of digital alterations of the male body was nowhere to be found, as a result, I used analytical and photographic semiotics to construct an understanding of the ways masculinity is defined, articulated, and enhanced in digitally manipulated images. While the multiplicity and multi-

dimensionality of the masculine is a benefit of the patriarchal infrastructure, however it becomes more difficult to achieve without being both white and wealthy. The ability to successfully brand a multi-dimensional image necessitates both these identities.

⁴² George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 56.

⁴³ Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 2

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁴⁶ Sean Nixon, *Hard Looks Masculinities, Spectatorship and Contemporary Consumption* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 13.

⁴⁷ Susan Bordo, *The Male Body* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999), 171; Nixon, *Hard Looks Masculinities, Spectatorship and Contemporary Consumption*, 170.

⁴⁸ <http://www.justjared.com/2010/01/01/leonardo-dicaprio-bar-refaeli-together-again/>

⁴⁹ Mosse, *The Image of Man*, 29.

⁵⁰ <http://www.cosmopolitan.com/celebrity/exclusive/male-celebs-photoshopped#slide-1>

⁵¹ Previously, physically fit bodies were a sign of the working class while more voluptuous bodies were a sign of wealth—the ability to pay for an eat any amount of food. Now, because the ideal body has changed, physically fit bodies have become a sign of leisure. Wealthy people now have the time and the money to spend on getting and keeping a physically fit body.

⁵² Mosse, *The Image of Man*, 9.

⁵³ Sander L. Gilman. “Damaged Men: Thoughts on Kafka’s Body,” in *Constructing Masculinities*, ed. Maurice Berger, Brian Wallis, and Simon Watson (New York: Routledge, 1996), 176.

⁵⁴ Mosse, *The Image of Man*, 56.

⁵⁵ Simon Yarrow, “Masculinity as a World Historical Category,” in *What is Masculinity*, ed. John H. Arnold, Sean Brady (Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 118.

⁵⁶ <http://nadinejolie.com/blog/2010/04/brad-pitt-sexiest-man-alive/>

⁵⁷ <http://ohnotheydidnt.livejournal.com/59712865.html>

⁵⁸ <http://www.usmagazine.com/celebrity-news/news/angelina-jolie-cried-when-brad-pitt-proposed--2012184>

⁵⁹ bell hooks, “Doing it for Daddy,” in *Constructing Masculinities*, ed. Maurice Berger, Brian Wallis, and Simon Watson (New York: Routledge, 1996), 103.

⁶⁰ <http://www.buzzfeed.com/lyapalater/why-it-doesnt-really-matter-at-all-that-leonardo-dicaprio-di>.

⁶¹ Lauren Yapalater, BuzzFeed, last modified March 4, 2014.

<http://www.buzzfeed.com/lyapalater/why-it-doesnt-really-matter-at-all-that-leonardo-dicaprio-di>.

⁶² Mosse, *The Image of Man*, 6.

⁶³ Stuart Hall, “Notes on Deconstructing the Popular,” in *Cultural Resistance Reader*, ed. by Stephen Duncombe (New York: Verso, 2002), 187.

⁶⁴ Nixon, *Hard Looks Masculinities, Spectatorship and Contemporary Consumption*, 170.

⁶⁵ Mosse, *The Image of Man*, 8.

-
- ⁶⁶ Nixon, *Hard Looks Masculinities, Spectatorship and Contemporary Consumption*, 13.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid., 14.
- ⁶⁸ <http://instagram.com/jamesfrancotv>
- ⁶⁹ For more images, check out James Franco's Instagram at <http://instagram.com/jamesfrancotv>.
- ⁷⁰ Nixon, *Hard Looks Masculinities, Spectatorship and Contemporary Consumption*, 14.
- ⁷¹ Hall, "Notes on Deconstructing the Popular," in *Cultural Resistance Reader*, 188.
- ⁷² Nixon, *Hard Looks Masculinities, Spectatorship and Contemporary Consumption*, 177.
- ⁷³ Stuart Hall, "Notes on Deconstructing the Popular," in *Cultural Resistance Reader*, 187.
- ⁷⁴ hooks, "Doing it for Daddy," in *Constructing Masculinities*, 119.
- ⁷⁵ American's racial and ethnic minorities now make up more than half of the under-5 age group with projections that in five years, minorities will make up more than half of children under 18. Even though this white stereotype doesn't reflect reality, it is still perpetuated in images.
- ⁷⁶ "12 Famous MEN Before & After Photoshop," Cosmopolitan. <http://www.cosmopolitan.com/celebrity/exclusive/male-celebs-photoshopped#slide-1>.
- ⁷⁷ <http://www.fanpop.com/clubs/jackie-chan/images/5478077/title/jackie-chan-photo>
- ⁷⁸ Nixon, *Hard Looks Masculinities, Spectatorship and Contemporary Consumption*, 177.
- ⁷⁹ <http://www.examiner.com/article/will-smith>
- ⁸⁰ <http://www.hark.com/collections/vscgphchdp-denzel-washington>
- ⁸¹ The lack of an ability to find digitally manipulated images of either Will Smith or Denzel Washington that were not outright caricatures provides evidence of the lack of discussion surrounding digitally manipulated men on the whole.
- ⁸² hooks, "Doing it for Daddy," in *Constructing Masculinities*, 118.
- ⁸³ Pultz, *Body and the Lens*, 20.

The Female Body: Constructed and Imposed Constraints

Femininity is constructed through a tangled web of social and political issues that explore how women's body are controlled, manipulated, denaturalized, and objectified. Even though the ideal female body has changed over time, bodies have always been a site of feminist contention because of claims and assertions regarding ownership of the body and of womanhood. In Western society, the ideal feminine figure stems from Greek art (paintings and sculptures) where women are white, blue-eyed, and blonde, and depending on the time period, either hourglass shaped or boyishly thin. While the standards surrounding a definition of beauty have changed, the fact that women must cater to these ideals in order to be “successful” has been around for centuries. It is also important to note that: “standards had not come to favor thinner bodies—rather, I had come to expect a tighter, smoother, more contained body profile.”⁸⁴ These preferences for a thinner body resulted from more exposure to images representing these ideals of beauty, and were furthered through continued dissemination of images of the female body—constructing a normalization of what it means to be feminine. Women are being constrained politically, personally, and professional through the repeated imagery and stereotypic representations of women in mass media.⁸⁵ At young ages, girls are taught to remain pure and innocent and grow up to be who and what they want (as long as its within reason), “you can

have ambition but not too much, you can be successful, but not too successful.”⁸⁶

There is a double standard attached to women’s agency, tying them down and constraining their ambitions. Along with the double standards of behavior, whatever professional success they hope to have will also be tied to their bodies. This standard is enforced through sexualized and fetishized images of women across the beauty industry—in fashion photos, cosmetic advertisements, popular magazines, promotional movie posters, and other imagistic media representations. These images foster a system of suggested beauty standards, ideals, and preferences (like those listed above) that aim to limit, constrain, and impose power upon women. Not only does this create societal systems of norms and expectations for how someone should think about oneself, but it also dictates how others should look at them: “men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only the relations of men to women, but the relation of women to themselves.”¹ More and more however, these patterns and relations of viewer to media content allow us to better understand “images of the female body as a site for exploring how gender/power relations are constituted in Western culture.”⁸⁷ Patriarchal ideals are forced upon impressionable minds and quickly become a concealed strength of power. These ideals are systematically determined through the use of both cultural and political means. Culturally, the use of language instructs the way both men and women think about women. Insults are especially gendered—if I were to count the number of insults referring to a woman’s body and the number referring to a man’s body, the discrepancy would be large. Then to consider what those insults mean and how they are being used points to an even bigger problem. For example, to call a man

a “pussy” is to say he is not being “man” enough, he is being too emotional, and he is embodying a lack of strength. To refer to a man as emasculated by using feminine terms is a way of reinforcing gendered stereotypes and gender roles. Politically, “we have ‘important issues’ (drugs, economics, war) and then ‘women’s issues’ (day care, birth control, peace), as if these matters could or should be divided at the gender line;” gender discrepancies are hierarchical in nature, and as a society, we have lowered the priority and importance of those issues.⁸⁸ Whereas if that same issue had been classified as a human’s rights issue (which most women’s issues are), then it would be getting more validity and attention in politics. Issues of pertaining to the body are considered women’s issues.

We can thus see how the incessant and irrational focus on the female form means that “the body is intimately attached to ourselves; it has something to do with who we are and this explains why we cannot will it away.”⁸⁹ The body has become a site where identity is formed because it is the first thing to be seen and judged by others—it demonstrates the attitudes and demands of normalization itself.⁹⁰ The very nature of humanity is embodied, and as such, “bodies are replacing selves and image counts more than ability.”⁹¹ Individual identity is being replaced by a collective normative identity. The collective identity is evocative of the representative identity in the disseminated images. Viewers assume that the physical identity being portrayed is a direct representation of the internal identity of each woman. Women tend to, “struggle with insecurity because [they] compare behind-the-scenes with everyone else’s highly reel.”⁹² This comparison feeds into a desire that women have to compare their bodies to those in images—a means of seeing how they measure up. This

understanding that the outward appearance directly reflects a person's internal worth can be applied to both genders even though the conceptions of what constitutes an ideal internal worth radically differ.

One aspect of the body that becomes an obstacle in defining physicality of femininity is the age of their skin. Women's bodies must withstand the test of time—they should not get wrinkles, skin rolls, stretch marks, blemishes, or freckles. The feminine ideal is constructed outside time constraints, “beauty is understood as a singular, uniform, unchanging and eternal form; something beyond the physical body...for while beauty may be everlasting and uniform, bodies are neither.”⁹³ Not only is there only one media represented definition of feminine, there are defining characteristics that exist outside time constraints, making sure that despite cultural and historical events, women are being physically, emotionally, culturally, and politically repressed. One way this happens, is through the media's focus on female youth as an ideal beauty. Despite changes in the ideal female body as either thin or curvaceous, no matter the time period women are only beautiful when/if they are young. First, patriarchal ideologies have determined that “aging in women is unbeautiful since women grow more powerful with time.”⁹⁴ Women are made to feel as though their wrinkles are ugly and demoralizing so that they can continue to be constrained and controlled through vigilant care and attention to their bodies. The patriarchy makes them out to feel powerless and innocent to conserve a dominant structure, and wrinkles provide the opposite of that—experience, knowledge, power, and time. Wrinkles also show a lack of control on the part of the female's maintenance of her body.

Second, normative beauty standards are meant to be a unique balance of somewhat reasonable, yet completely unattainable in order to maintain control over women's agency and enslave them to their bodies. Because the patriarchy has systematically dictated that beauty is a strong centering for a woman's identity, there is more stress put on women to emulate these ideal images of femininity. By situating the ideal beauty just far enough out of reach and attainability, the patriarchy is maintaining hegemonic control over the *other*, "those designated by the dominant culture as Other (old, homosexual, fat, disabled, and/or female) become imprisoned in their bodies."⁹⁵ Women are chained to the current ideal female figure, a woman who is white, thin, and has large breasts. Their female agency is enslaved by a patriarchal dominance and a confined identity that is directly tied to the body.

This connection between identity and the body explains why images of women in magazines in fashion shoots and advertisements simultaneously dictate and reinforce patriarchal attitudes, actions, behaviors, and ideologies. These patriarchal normative values are created not just by images, but by words, actions, laws, cultural institutions, worldviews, etc. The expected behaviors that define 'proper womanhood' are a lack of aggression, making less money than men, being active consumers, and cooking meals for the family.

The beauty industry is attempting to control women through vigilance over their bodies. By constructing a parallel between outward appearance and internal personality and identity, "women's identities and deepest sense of moral worthiness are forged and are most clearly and consistently the locus of controlling images and messages of perfection and perfectibility."⁹⁶ The size and shape of a woman's body

have come to operate as an indication and symbol for the emotional, moral, and spiritual state of the individual's identity.⁹⁷ Because an individual is inherently embodied, their identity is a combination of both their internal and external person. When these two identities are not congruent, there is an imbalance in the self. It seems easier, more attainable, and more obvious then, that in order to achieve harmony, a woman should control and fix her outward appearance.⁹⁸

The patriarchy has instilled these ideologies through its exnominated pervasiveness, however women are the ones reinforcing these ideas because women are participating in these invisible structures in a variety of different ways. In the past men had controlled the leadership structure of women's magazines, but more recently, women's magazines have female Editors-in-Chief and decision makers. However, because bodies are central to female discourse, women are discriminated against because of their physical appearance—not just by other men, but also mostly other women, “the confrontation with our corporeal uniqueness can arise independently of the other's gaze...this means that vulnerability is not necessarily something relational, but can also be something very intimate.”⁹⁹ Because it's intimate, women often judge themselves by how they stack up to other woman around them. This, in time, turns into judgment of both the other women and themselves. Women are more often their own worst enemy—they look at other women the same way they look at images, as ideals to compare themselves to. They see all the little things on other women, the things that get digitally removed from photographs, the things that men don't see and often don't even care about. These comparisons exemplify the invisible nature and internalization of hegemonic beauty ideals as well

as an understanding of the convergence of these ideologies and images with new meanings, actions, and behaviors. Women define for themselves the ways in which they will react. Some women react internally (an explanation for the rise in eating disorders) while others react publically in the ways they consume products and services (a result in the number of cosmetic surgeries). These unique responses to the same images reflect where and in what ways a site of meaning is constructed. The convergence of media-produced images and gender-specific performances elucidates the impact these images have on society as a whole as well as individuals in particular.

There is a lack of variety in the ways women can choose to represent themselves and the ways they are represented in images because they are held down by the feminine *other*. Women are being enslaved to their bodies both by the patriarchal ideologies that disseminate through mass media, and by judgments from other women. Female participate in these judgments, their actions work to advance the role of the patriarchal ideologies that constrain women's agency and confine their identity to their body. Women participate in these comparisons because, "fascination itself is an object of fascination for the critical eye," which quickly turn into judgments as a way to better understand how they stack up against other female bodies.¹⁰⁰ Women look longingly and critically at other women in the same way that they view themselves because they are seeing the feminine body as "an object of contemplation, amazement, and perverse desire."¹⁰¹ The perversity is a result of women being obsessed with and unable to turn away from these sexualized images. The depth of self-loathing attached to the desire to emulate these celebrity beauties

reflects the complex relationship many women have with their bodies. Because they are then left with guilt and shame for not stacking up to the ideal on two accounts, “like all women who fail to conform, [she] is not only Other, she is Error; flawed both in her failure to be a normal male and her inability to appear as a normal female.”¹⁰² This underscores the double dose of limitations placed on Westernized women—when they fail, they fail for themselves and for society; they fail to stand up to other men as well as other women. Females must conform to a very specific set of codes and instructions dictating not just how they are supposed to look, but how they must act as well. And they are held accountable by the patriarchy—leaving no room for a multidimensional femininity because the ideal woman can only be constructed within the existing confines of patriarchal regulations.

When women are categorized and stereotyped, they are only associated to one category at a time. Because of this singular way to look at women, they are first and foremost the, “object of the phallogentric gaze” and represent whatever the men in charge think an audience wants to see.¹⁰³ Women are represented generically and one-dimensionally so that any audience (men or women) can resonate with the image. Of course, realistically, women can identify as many things depending on the context, environment, and social factors. However, society does not allow for this multidimensionality because it ties so strongly to the worth, value, and identity of their bodies.

The singularity of womanhood is another factor in the enslavement of female agency. When women feel as though their identity is not being represented, they begin to feel as though their identity is wrong and should be changed to reflect the

‘ideal.’ Lupita Nyong’o, Oscar winning actor for her portrayal of Patsy in *12 Years a Slave* spoke at Essence Magazine’s 7th annual Black Women in Hollywood event. She remembers how she feels about herself and her ‘acceptable femininity’ changed after seeing Alek Wek’s modeling career take off:

I couldn’t believe that people were embracing someone who looked so much like me as beautiful. My complexion had always been an obstacle to over come and all of a sudden, Oprah was telling me it wasn’t. It was perplexing, and I wanted to reject it because I had begun to enjoy the seduction of inadequacy. But a flower couldn’t help but bloom inside me. When I saw Alek, I inadvertently saw a reflection of myself that I could not deny. Now I had a spring in my step because I felt more seen, more appreciated by the far away gatekeepers of beauty.¹⁰⁴

Against the backdrop of her eloquent words, Lupita reflects on the singular ideal that whatever is represented in media is beautiful, and whatever is not part of that representation is not beautiful. The feminine ideal of a white woman, and a particular white woman at that excludes all other women from the ability to feel beautiful—constraining their identity and their ability to share that identity publically. Lupita’s struggle to see herself as beautiful reflects a problematic discourse in society. Even though white standards of beauty are critiqued verbally, they are covertly adopted by women of color in order to be coded, seen, and accepted by others as feminine and attractive.¹⁰⁵ The desire that women have to emulate the types of women they see in images results from a perverse desire that Baudrillard refers to. Because of the limited scope of existing representations, this is cause for concern. The female desire stems from a strong motivation to fit in, an appeal to be seen as important, a yearning to be valued personally and professionally, and an overall longing to be liked. The female desire also stems from the Lacanian gaze, where the spectator relates the image then

creates desire from this lacking feeling, pulling the spectator toward the image in the photo to he/she's own body, realizing an imbalanced harmony of his/her body with the body in the photograph. This comparison and sense of yearning reveals a sense of inadequacy in not being able to attain the ideal feminine beauty as depicted in the image.

Because of this complex relationship, the body becomes a symbol of self, whether or not it is mediated.¹⁰⁶ Women are measuring themselves against other images of women, and this is where a disconnect is created; they see those images and compare their body to that of a women in the image. Digital photo correction uses women's bodies against themselves: they use photos that portray ideal beauty as a normative ideology of how women should look, act, and perceive the world. Images reinforce an ideology that the body is a commodity in order to keep women consuming—forcing them to work within the confines of the economy as opposed to allowing them to recreate an economy that includes them; women are being used as puppets, chess pieces. Women are confined and enslaved to their beautiful body to obtain a job, to be promoted, and to be taken seriously as an academic, an artist, or a scientist. The current beauty standard of thinness and large breasts means that women diet, starve, exercise, and undergo cosmetic surgery at excessive levels. The beauty industry is creating a commodity audience that attempts to achieve these modes of perfection. It does so through an ingrained and systematic preoccupation with appearance, “a complex system of structured social practices, variously referred to as the politics of appearance, the technologies of body management, the beauty system, the aesthetic scaling of bodies, the fashion-beauty complex, or the beauty

backlash.”¹⁰⁷ Beauty is the ideal industry because it is consistently impossible to achieve, yet be consistently believe that we can achieve the “ideal” beauty. Because of these contradictions, women are paying, both physically and financially, to conform to an ideology that strips them of themselves. Then once they achieve this, their photographs are altered even more, because their worth and value in themselves and their real bodies is never quite good enough.



Jennifer Lawrence, a well-known actress, understands how audiences, particularly of young women, respond to these images and identity complications. She understands that women compare their own body to images of celebrities and try to emulate them—no matter the physical, emotional, or financial cost. As a result, she tries to be a good role model on and off the screen and has said:

“I’m never going to starve myself for a part... I don’t want little girls to be like, 'Oh, I want to look like Katniss, so I’m going to skip dinner.' That’s something I was really conscious of during training, when you’re trying to get your body to look exactly right. I was trying to get my body to look fit and strong — not thin and underfed.”¹⁰⁹

She has become an inspiration to young girls by teaching them that their physical appearance does not have to reflect their inner personhood and that their inner self is way more important. Because she is very vocal about not seeing herself the way the

industry sees her, she is trying to share that message with younger, more impressionable girls. By almost everyone who isn't in the Hollywood industry, Jennifer Lawrence is considered skinny, so to be called fat by casting directors and producers in Hollywood shows the extent to which women's bodies are under intense scrutiny both within and outside the image. Photographs of her body are manipulated to make her even thinner, which often seems appalling considering how thin she already is. While her activism beneficial, however, the conversation surrounding Jennifer Lawrence's acting career is problematic, as it is still centered around her body, not her acting abilities, and sadly, Jennifer's actions are perpetuating that. Ironically, this becomes a spectacle in and of itself. By maintaining a focus on women's bodies as a means to success in any profession, the unrealistic standards imposed on women become visible.

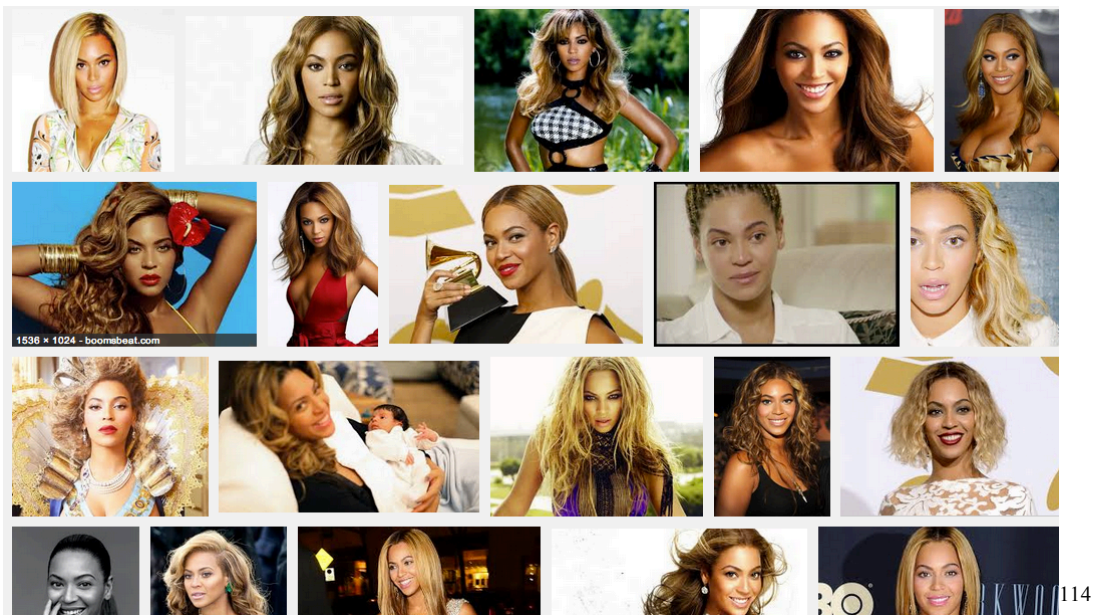
As previously mentioned, when images of celebrities have been modified so profoundly that the real women in those images do not reflect their photographic representation, those desires for the perfectly beautiful body become increasingly unattainable, "technologically generated and endlessly reproduced images of female bod[y] are the measuring stick against which women evaluate their own worth, find it wanting and feel worthless."¹¹⁰ Because these women do not achieve their goals, the struggle between a sense of lacking and simultaneous desire is a result of the over the top manipulations of images. These images juxtapose the explicit photo of an ideal female body with an implicit understanding that the body belongs to a strong, powerful, well put-together woman who is in control of her self and her life. An internal conflicting dichotomy exists where a woman wants to conform to cultural

values while maintaining her individuality. The goal of uniqueness and defining an individualized feminine identity becomes complex when the “ideal femininity” is in fact the opposite, homogenized and normalized.

Even though the feminine is constructed as *other* in comparison to male, there are also very strong hierarchies and *others* within the female ideal. The normative desirable female body is eternally wealthy, youthful, and slender, yet voluptuous.¹¹¹ If a female does not fall into this construction of the ideal female body, then there are strong, yet invisible, “dichotomies of Otherness and power hierarchies between women. Blue-eyed, thin white women could not be considered beautiful without the Other—black, women with classical African features of dark skin, broad noses, full lips, and kinky hair.”¹¹² Normativity is constructed through invisible structures of exclusion. Structures that are remnants of patriarchal control and perpetuated and continued by other women: a regulation of what is desirable and how to “adequately” manage the body (through diets, exercise, and sheer power of will). An exclusion of large, full-bodied women—women of color, women who don't have strong white physical facial features—is used to maintain the power of white beauty. Features of exclusion and inclusion are often accentuated, with the use of digital alteration techniques, almost to the point of denaturalization in order to clearly define the lines.

However, because there is nothing explicit about these images, they invisibly articulate the dominant white ideal even if they are referencing a subordinate ideal. As with all references to dominant structure they, “reference that which is not white, as if only the non-whiteness can give whiteness any substance.”¹¹³ Dyer's reference gets at the dichotomous aspect of *otherness*, however, just like concepts of

femininity, masculinity, and patriarchy, it is multidimensional. Otherness is not a binary as hegemonic structures have constructed it; but rather, exists on a spectrum. With the feminine *other*, there are layers of *otherness*—skin color, age, class, sexual orientation, gender identity, and ability (just to name a few). This hierarchy of *othering* determines which aspects of inclusion and exclusion are most important, but instead of squarely sitting on a binary dichotomy, a scale is constructed where all these elements are rated accordingly. Women of color, like Beyoncé, then represent two *othered* aspects (the feminine and the nonwhite).



The issue of race often comes up in discussions of bad digital alterations, especially with regards to women of color. Since we come to know celebrities via their mediated contexts, it becomes completely obvious that a woman was digitally manipulated when various images of the same woman are not equivalent, as is the case in a Google Image search of Beyoncé. In comparing myriad images of Beyoncé, her mediated look is so many different skin colors that it becomes nearly impossible to tell what her “true” skin color actually is, “unless there is obvious evidence of

manipulation, we normally assume we are dealing with straight photographs.”¹¹⁵ It become increasingly clear as you scroll down the page that every image of her is manipulated and the personal and physical assumptions of Beyoncé that you had in your head could be completely wrong. The only thing one can really understand besides that fact that she is 'nonwhite,' and thus a woman of color, is that digital alterations are prevalent in every single photograph. It becomes indecipherable which image depicts the “real” Beyoncé. Each image on their own seems plausibly “Beyoncé,” however when you look at them all together, it becomes clear of the prevalence and normalcy of photographic manipulation.



116



117

When Beyoncé's image is on the cover of *Ebony Magazine*, a publication with a notoriously large black audience, her skin is darker; however, when she is on the cover of *Cosmopolitan*, her skin is severely lightened. *Cosmopolitan*, a magazine with a large wealthy, white audience is attempting to cater to that audience by making the women of color look less ethnic and more white, “den[ying] the body of the black female so as to perpetuate white supremacy and within a phallogentric spectatorship

where the woman to be looked at and desired is white.”¹¹⁸ These digital changes in skin color contribute to and perpetuate the hegemonic structures of whiteness. Not only that, but the photo editors made her physical features look more European on the Cosmo cover and less European on the Ebony cover—both almost to an unrecognizable extent.

Digital manipulation helps maintain the ideal that a woman’s body is a defining factor in her identity as a person and a professional. While, “Beauvoir proposes that the female body ought to be the situation and instrumentality of women’s freedom, not a defining and limiting essence,” because of the current ways digital photo alteration techniques are used on a female body, this will not be the case in the near future.¹¹⁹ The ideologies expressed in digitally enhanced images completely denaturalize the feminine body in a way that strips a woman of herself and of the features that make her unique. Photo manipulation in itself is not what confines a woman’s body and limits her essence, rather it is the current ways that the technology are being implemented and used differently in the beauty industry, in the magazine industry, and in the film industry.



Kate Winslet, a famous Oscar-winning actor most known for her performances in *Titanic*, *The Reader*, and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, has graced the cover of numerous magazines in her career. Her photographic representations provide concretized evidence of the way in which women's bodies are denaturalized through digital manipulation. In 2003, her photo appeared on the cover of *GQ* magazine. Just like any other actor who has been on a magazine cover, her body has been digitally altered with the use of photo manipulation tactics. In response to the alterations, Kate commented, "The retouching is excessive. I do not look like that, and more importantly, I do not desire to look like that. I actually have a Polaroid that the photographer gave me on the day of the shoot... I can tell you they've reduced the size of my legs by about a third."¹²¹ By comparing the original photograph to its manipulated equivalent, Kate calls attention to the photographic medium as a means of evidence. Stating her desire exposes confirmation of the individual's internalization of the normative ideology.

Through this image, Kate now comes to signify what beauty looks like. The viewer sees the subject as a sign, signifying a concept or standard (beauty), "to photograph people is to violate them, by seeing them as they never see themselves, by having knowledge of them they can never have; it turns people in objects that can be symbolically possessed."¹²² The subject embodies, embraces, and illuminates the standard and ideology of beauty—thus making it more pervasive. By being on the cover of a magazine, Kate not only embodies the beauty ideology, but the magazine itself endorses these standards of beauty giving the ideal female body power, value, and desirability.

These standards construct an ideology of beauty. For example, an image portrays what is wrong with a woman's body, while simultaneously telling her how to fix it. Women then believe they have agency to and are choosing a beautiful body, when in fact the imposition of the ideology was embedded within the image. These women do not need to be controlled through blatant forced strategies, but rather the illusion of choice and agency is all that is necessary for conformation to occur. These regulating ideologies become invisible structures of biopower, "normalization functions to screen out diversity and perpetuate social norms, often connected to race and gender...to create a perception of personal lack in the consumer."¹²³ Images have power, and each new photo reinforces the hegemonic structure and ideology of beauty they embody. Kate then, by publically asserting she "doesn't look like that," differentiates the original real photo from the digitally altered photo that claims "reality." Because a photograph has the power to define reality and to create normative conceptions, Kate's disidentification calls attention and visibility to the practice of photo manipulation techniques and the pervasiveness of their use as a tool to construct and embody the female beauty aesthetic.

While there is still a fine line between acceptable and unacceptable uses of digital editing, just like there are acceptable and unacceptable physical beautification techniques, it is pretty evident that current photo manipulation tactics of women's bodies, with the help and accessibility of Adobe Photoshop have crossed the line. As Tina writes,

You can barely recognize yourself with the amount of digital correction. They've taken out your knuckles and given you baby hands. The muscular calves that you're generally very proud of are slimmed to the bone. And what's with the eyes? They always get it

wrong under the eyes. In an effort to remove any dark circles they take out any depth, and your face looks like it was drawn on a paper plate.¹²⁴

These tactics create a completely new person. By taking away part of the visual characteristics that make Tina who she is, the photo editors are also stripping her of her identity. They are indirectly saying that she isn't good enough the way she is, that the parts of her she is proud of that make her normal, real, and "essentially Tina" need to be removed. The photo editors are re-creating an identity around her image, her body. The significance of removing her muscles, her knuckles, and her dark circles is far more than just that just that; it is a removal of an identity. The editors are removing her success as a comedian, writer, and as a mother, "eras[ing] a women's identity, power, and history."¹²⁵ Photo manipulation tactics are considered overdone and crossing the line when they remove and discredit any part of the individual's complete identity. By using photo manipulation to enhance or erase parts of Tina's body, the photo editor is refusing to accept all of Tina—not just her body, but her personality, her success, her character, and her power.

Photo editing reduces women's power and identity to their bodies. This is problematic for numerous reasons. First, because it creates an environment where the body becomes a commodity to be bought, sold, and traded. It's one reason why the number of cosmetic plastic surgeries has risen 98% since 2000, and it's the reason the dieting industry has skyrocketed in the past few decades.¹²⁶ The rise in cosmetic surgeries clearly articulates how perverse the use of photo manipulation technologies has become. A normalization of patriarchal ideologies becomes clear after a study of women who received cosmetic surgeries, "women all insist that they did not have

cosmetic surgery to become more beautiful (or white), they just wanted to look more normal.”¹²⁷ The fact that these women don’t understand that looking “normal” means becoming what society defines as “beautiful,” is evidence in itself of how invisible the structures of dominance really are.

Cosmetic surgery can thus be understood as a real life rendition of the techniques of photographic alterations. Digital photo manipulations have attached the body’s value and meaning to normative beauty standards. Now that society is making money off women’s bodies because they have been reduced to objects and commodities, “beauty [becomes] a currency system like the gold standard. Like any economy, it is determined by politics.”¹²⁸ In order to have beauty, women trade it in for success, happiness, or money. The relationship individuals have to their body has become an investment in their body as a product.¹²⁹ This commodity feminism makes women feel the need to buy products to improve their body—dieting programs, cosmetic surgery, makeup industry, fashion industry—by emptying their political significance and offering the female body in a commodified form.¹³⁰ Society infiltrates women’s minds, teaching them what the “proper” body should look like. Buying products to improve the self inherently teaches women that her body isn’t good enough naturally. Advertisements aren’t just selling products; they are attaching their commodity to the sale of women’s bodies by using images of the “ideal woman,” “the slender body codes the tantalizing ideal of a well-managed self in which all is kept in order despite the contradictions of consumer culture.”¹³¹ This cycle of maintaining consumers by making them feel illegitimate and “unbeautiful” also maintains a patriarchal society where these codes are invisible, “in order to sell

products they have to either exploit or create a perception of personal lack in the consumer.”¹³² Women perceive to have agency over their bodies, when in reality their agency is being converted to biopower to sustain a hegemonic discourse. The commodification of the body means that at its root, the body is considered an object (by both men and women).

The normative ideology of beauty dictates that the body needs to be altered to be beautiful, which aspects of the body need to be changed and how they are manipulated. This ideology defines a normative standard of beauty—defining and constraining the female body to be consistently and necessarily white, young, and skinny. It does so seamlessly because “despite our knowledge of the ways in which photographs can mislead and distort, we nevertheless irresistibly see the photograph as faithfully recording for us the appearance of the world.”¹³³

By tracing the way in which images teach the preferences of society and create an ideology of beauty that pervades American culture and the understanding of how beauty exists in the lives of both men and women, one can come to understand the problems photo manipulation causes. Digital image correction defines and creates these invisible, invasive, and unrealistic standards of beauty because the assumptions of regular photographs are carried over to assumptions regarding all other images, “unless there is obvious evidence of manipulation, we normally assume we are dealing with straight photographs.”¹³⁴ Photo manipulation tactics are used as a tool to create conceptions of beauty, and subsequently, to invisibly maintain the suppression of women’s agency.

In elucidating the ideal femininity as represented in images, a greater understanding of the role women play in society becomes clear. Through an analysis of female celebrities such as Kate Winslet, Lupita Nyong'o, Tina Fey, and Jennifer Lawrence, one can begin to understand the ways in which digital manipulation furthers these hegemonic ideals. With this chapter, I also hoped to complicate previous notions about feminine subversiveness as not only inflicted by men, but also by other women. Digital manipulation rearticulates both male and female ideals of what ideal femininity looks like in order to construct and maintain a one-dimensional definition of what it means to be a woman. While the ideal female body and the socially constructed female beauty ideals have changed throughout history, they have remained a defining tenant of femininity. The ideal, while initially made by men to keep women in their place, the ideologies remain so constricting because women are constraining and judging each other's identities and definitions of beauty. Race and class also play a strong role in the construction of femininity, especially with regards to its digitally altered representations—images are coded to represent white women, and if women of color are represented, they are shown in a way to make them look more “white:” either by lightening their skin or by making their facial and body resemble physical ideals of “whiteness.” This not only denaturalizes their personal identity, but their mediated identity as well. The overuses of digital manipulation in images of women confine and narrow the idea of femininity, and normalizes the concept of what it means to be beautiful.

⁸⁴ Bordo, *Unbearable Weight*. 188.

⁸⁵ Davis, *Reshaping the Female Body*, 54.

-
- ⁸⁶ Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, "We Should All Be Feminists," Ted.com.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hg3umXU_qWc.
- ⁸⁷ Davis, *Reshaping the Female Body*, 54.
- ⁸⁸ Carol Tavis, *The Mismeasure of Woman*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 17.
- ⁸⁹ Eva De Clercq, *The Seduction of the Female Body: Women's Rights in Need of a New Body Politics*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 128.
- ⁹⁰ Bordo, *Unbearable Weight*, 203.
- ⁹¹ Catherine Valentine, "Female Bodily Perfection and the Divided Self," in *Ideals of Feminine Beauty Philosophical, Social, and Cultural Dimensions*, ed. by Karen A. Callaghan (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), 115.
- ⁹² Steve Furtick, inspirational quote.
- ⁹³ Wendy Chapkis, *Body Secrets Women and the Politics of Appearance*. (Boston: South End Press, 1986), 14.
- ⁹⁴ Naomi Wolf. *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used against Women* (New York: W. Morrow, 1991), 14.
- ⁹⁵ Davis, *Reshaping the Female Body: The Dilemma of Cosmetic Surgery*, 51.
- ⁹⁶ Valentine, "Female Bodily Perfection and the Divided Self," in *Ideals of Feminine Beauty Philosophical, Social, and Cultural Dimensions*, 115.
- ⁹⁷ Bordo, *Unbearable Weight*, 193.
- ⁹⁸ Bordo, "Braveheart, Babe, and the Contemporary Body," in *Enhancing Human Traits*, 205. Bordo refers to a mind/body disharmony when the soul feels a certain way than the body looks.
- ⁹⁹ De Clercq, *The Seduction of the Female Body*, 127.
- ¹⁰⁰ Jean Baudrillard, *The Conspiracy of Art*, (New York: Semiotext(e), 2005), 188.
- ¹⁰¹ Ibid., 184.
- ¹⁰² Chapkis, *Body Secrets Women and the Politics of Appearance*, 5.
- ¹⁰³ bell hooks, "The Oppositional Gaze," in *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 119.
- ¹⁰⁴ Lupita Nyong'o, *Essence* 7th Annual Black Women in Hollywood.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZPCkfARH2eE#t=200>.
- ¹⁰⁵ Karen A. Callaghan, *Ideals of Feminine Beauty Philosophical, Social, Cultural Dimensions*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), xiii.
- ¹⁰⁶ De Clercq, *The Seduction of the Female Body*, 128.
- ¹⁰⁷ Davis, *Reshaping the Female Body*, 51.
- ¹⁰⁸ <http://fashion.telegraph.co.uk/article/TMG10522702/Jennifer-Lawrence-the-Photoshop-debate-continues.html>
- ¹⁰⁹ Abbey Stone, "Jennifer Lawrence Talks About her Weight, Again," Hollywood. Last modified November 9, 2012.
<http://www.hollywood.com/news/celebrities/43959185/jennifer-lawrence-talks-about-her-weight-again?page=all>.
- ¹¹⁰ Valentine, "Female Bodily Perfection and the Divided Self," in *Ideals of Feminine Beauty*, 116.
- ¹¹¹ Davis, *Reshaping the Female Body*, 50.
- ¹¹² Ibid., 51.

-
- ¹¹³ Richard Dyer, "White," in *Film and Theory: An Anthology*, ed. by Robert Stam and Toby Miller. (Malden: Blackwell, 2000), 736.
- ¹¹⁴ Google.com "Beyoncé"
- ¹¹⁵ Barbara E. Savedoff, "Escaping Reality: Digital Imagery and the Resources of Photography." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 55, no. 2 (1997): 201-214., 209.
- ¹¹⁶ Ebony, April 2009
- ¹¹⁷ Cosmopolitan, December 2012
- ¹¹⁸ hooks, "The Oppositional Gaze," in *Black Looks*, 118.
- ¹¹⁹ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 17.
- ¹²⁰ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/10/14/kate-winslet-vogue-photos_n_4096789.html
- ¹²¹ Leslie Goldman. "Kate Winslet's Freakishly Long Legs." *iVillage*. N.p., 28 July 2010.
- ¹²² Sontag, *On Photography*, 14.
- ¹²³ Bordo, "Braveheart, Babe, and the Contemporary Body," in *Enhancing Human Traits*, 192.
- ¹²⁴ Fey. *Bossypants*, 156-7.
- ¹²⁵ Wolf. *The Beauty Myth*, 83.
- ¹²⁶ American Society of Plastic Surgeons
- ¹²⁷ De Clercq. *The Seduction of the Female Body*, 138.
- ¹²⁸ Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*, 12.
- ¹²⁹ Bordo, "Braveheart, Babe, and the Contemporary Body," in *Enhancing Human Traits*, 202.
- ¹³⁰ For more about commodity feminism, check out Robert Goldman's or Angela McRobbie's work.
- ¹³¹ Bordo, *Unbearable Weight*, 201.
- ¹³² Bordo, "Braveheart, Babe, and the Contemporary Body," in *Enhancing Human Traits*, 192.
- ¹³³ Savedoff, "Escaping Reality," in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 203.
- ¹³⁴ Ibid., 209.

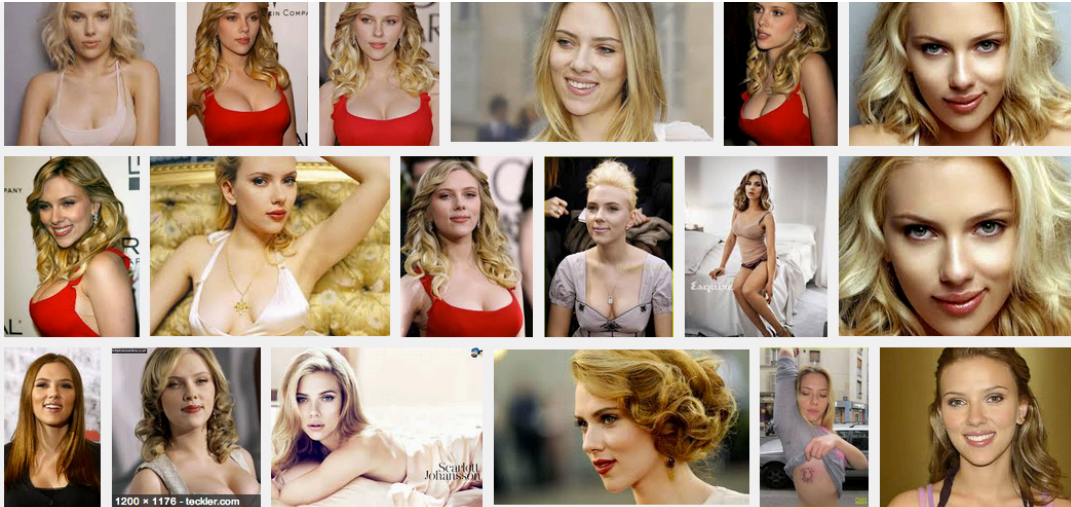
The Gendered Look: A Comparative Analysis

Women and men receive radically different treatment with respect to gendered representations in images. Photographic elements combined with the digital manipulations construct an overall stereotype of what each gender should look like, how men and women should act and behave, and what they should be doing personally and professionally. The existence and pervasiveness of these images and the recognition they give to certain privileged or nonprivileged groups, “is itself an implicit confirmation of the ideology of the status quo.”¹³⁵ The power of the image in conjunction with the power of the ideological status quo (both invisible structures of dominance) together construct a fool-proof dissemination of targeted and tailored information to the masses. When digital image manipulation is used in the picture, the symbolism of the image becomes even stronger, “the extent that we can see photographs as potentially indistinguishable from their digitally altered counterparts, photographs become suspect as carriers of even the most basic information, suspect as bearers of any evidence.”¹³⁶ Images retain their power only to the extent to which the viewer internalizes and values its content. Because digital imaging technology is advancing quickly and becoming more nuanced, it becomes more and more difficult to determine when an image has been digitally altered. As a result, assumptions regarding the validity and truthfulness of any given image cannot be made.¹³⁷ The

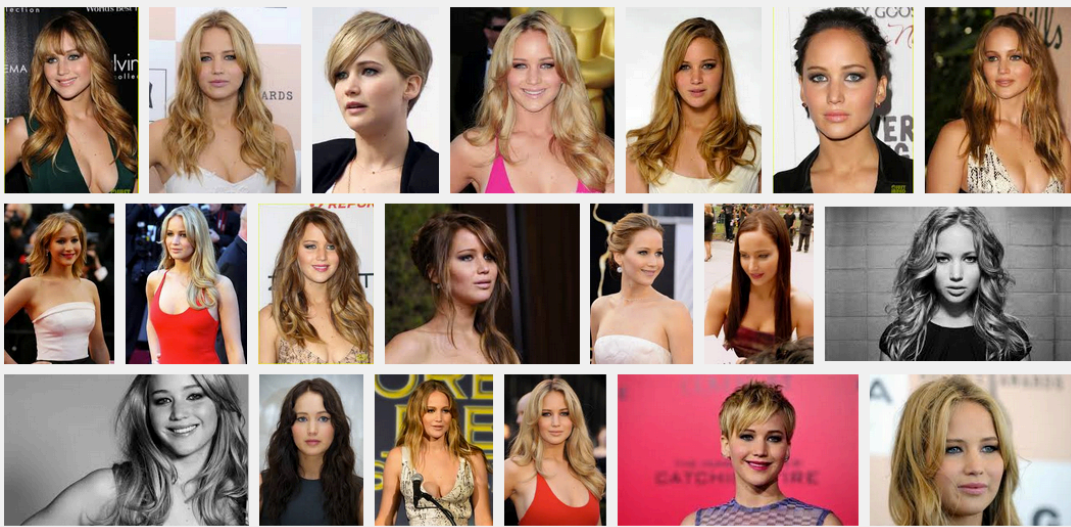
stability of gendered relationships constructed through the subjected images are an illusion, and the digitally altered images uphold and reinforce the gender binary, while simultaneously changing it.

There are a lot of comparisons that can be seen across the genders, but there are also a variety of ways in which gender is constructed in opposition to each other. The antagonisms I focus on are (1) the women's bodies but men's faces, (2) the role of photo manipulation to denaturalize of the female body while the male form is enhanced, (3) the lack of multidimensionality in the expression of femininity with the wide opportunities for multidimensionality in masculinity, (4) a non-erotic gaze when women look at other women, while the intense fear of the homosexual experience when men look at other men, and (5) the constant association with women with the term "beauty," while the comparable term does not exist when applying the same concepts to men.

When beginning my research on digitally manipulated images of celebrities, I noticed a repetition of the same trends. After detecting a pattern in which parts of the body were typically altered, it became easy to determine what would be inside the photographic frame, what representations would never been seen and depicted in an image, and how the final post-manipulated photo would look. Then, a larger pattern emerged; images of men were framed around their faces, while the entire body of a women was included in the frame. These decisions surrounding the choices of which aspects of the body are included in the frame speak to a higher symbolism surrounding which aspects of the body are important to a gendered identity.



138



139



140

A Google Image search of Scarlett Johansson, for example, shows this pattern clearly; almost all images of her face are framed in such a way as to include her breasts in the image. All other images of her are full body images. Similarly, more than half of Jennifer Lawrence's photos include cleavage—drawing attention away from her face and towards the rest of her body. The issue here is the subjectivity of the photographic frame. According to Barthes' understanding of the semiotics of an image, one can understand how the choice to frame breasts in "headshots" of women and not in the images of men, invisibly dictate the gendered representations and associate certain aspects of the body as important to a gender identity. Whereas, a Google Image search of a male celebrity is taken from the shoulders up and rarely are men's full bodies photographed unless they are shirtless. Bradley Cooper's search page has close-up photographs of his face. These close-up framing techniques are not typically used when taking pictures of women because it has been argued that men's bodies are less important to their public professional significance than women's. The female body is central to the representation of a woman's success, ability, personal identity, and professional wealth, while the male body enhances success and ability.

These differences exemplify a cyclical exploration of the production and circulation of photographs. While, the subjectivity of the photographic framing is a result of strong "cultural associations of [the] mind with masculinity, and [the] body with femininity," these cultural associations were constructed through the continued presence and distribution of these images. The cyclical production, reception, and continued production of these types of images and techniques of framing establishes

and maintains a hegemonic ideology that confines a woman's worth to her body, allowing men's identities to roam unaffected.

People inherently compare situations, experiences, people, and categories in order to grasp a concrete understanding of the world. When looking at images, it is only inevitable that individuals "look at the relation between things [in the image] and ourselves."¹⁴¹ This process of looking, judging, and comparing creates a conscious observer. The judgments and comparisons of the content of the images made by the viewer are based on patriarchal assumptions of gender roles, actions, and behaviors. The images explore and symbolize the physical ideals regarding gender: that men must be definitively muscular, taut, thin, and white while women must be stick thin, large breasted, and passibly white. Based on the connoted ideologies in each photo, images also prescribe behaviors, roles, and attitudes appropriate for each gender more broadly. Men are regarded as "macho," controlling, assertive, curious, competitive, independent and physically strong. Women are perceived as empathetic, caring, helpful, emotional, and dependent. These ideas are encoded into the semiotics of the image—the frame, pose of the body, facial expression, and lighting.

Aside from the gendered symbolism explored above, the gaze also plays an important role in determining who has the power to be looking, and who is being looked at. Depending on the gender for the each of these, the power dynamics shift. Male "subjects look at the viewer still more boldly, having no fear of the controlling gaze of the camera or viewer. Male, white, Euro-American, soldier, and free, he has no reason to fear the eye that views him as an eye of power."¹⁴² It is because of this lack of fear of the gaze as well as their "macho" masculinity that men's faces are

photographed often, and their faces reflect that ambivalence. On the contrary, women's bodies are framed in such a way that their fear and shyness is evoked in the image. The pose of the subject has a lot to do with an understanding of the gaze: women are often angled away from the lens, while men are depicted straight on, perpendicular to the lens. The representation of females with respect to the gaze reflects a weak relationship with the power (as women are not stereotypically supposed to be in control) of the ways of seeing, "the surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object—most particularly an object of vision: a sight."¹⁴³ Even if there are both male and female viewers, women see, judge, and compare bodies as if they were male—holding both themselves and others to a higher standard. In fact, the standard of the female viewer is more harsh and critical of female bodies than a male would be.¹⁴⁴

While women look critically at images of other women and no one thinks twice about its sexual nature, when men see images of other men, however, homosexuality immediately comes into question. The discrepancy in the sexual nature of the images and the acceptability with regards to reception has a lot to do with Lacan's concept of the gaze. This erotic or lack of an erotic gaze influences the way subjects in images are represented, "women are depicted in a quite different way from men—not because the feminine is different from the masculine—but because the "ideal" spectator is always assumed to be male and the image of the woman is designed to flatter him."¹⁴⁵ Because the assumed gaze is that of a heterosexual white male, the media producers will not eroticize images of men. Such representations would encourage homosexuality—a site of political and cultural contention.

Similarly, the lack of eroticism in representations of men also explains the overdose of eroticism for images of women—to appeal to the masculine heterosexual gaze. However, the individuals seeing these images are not just male or white. The homosexual gaze is only problematic for the masculine gender, and not a lesbian viewer, because the “ideal” masculinity as inherently straight would be compromised and undermined. Despite the inherent problems with any assumption of who is “looking,” an understanding of the discrepancies in the erotic or nonerotic gaze shed light on how gender roles are constructed and conserved.

It is through the reception of these images then, that we, as members of Western society, are taught how to perform gender, “we no longer are told what 'a lady' is or of what femininity consists. Rather, we learn the rules directly through bodily discourse: through images which tell us what clothes, body shape, facial expression, movements, and behavior are required.”¹⁴⁶ Women are the focus of how the media is corrupting and minimizing their abilities based on their representations; however, men are also taught about the ideal macho masculinity through these images and representations, initiating and instilling in gendered habits that attempt to achieve these ideals. While women’s bodies are more reflective of their complete identity than men, these images have the same type of impact on gendered identities with varying in degrees of influence.

These influences have opposing effects: digitally altered images of women denaturalize the female ideal to the extent that all conceptions of that woman’s identity and personality have been picked apart and destroyed while manipulated photographs of men enhance their identity and personality by enhancing their

physical features. These gendered representations construct opposing ideologies surrounding the ideal male and female body and how that symbolizes their influence and power within 21st century culture and society. The extent to which the female body is denaturalized is determined based on the intensity and prevalence of the use of digitally enhancing technologies such as Photoshop. The persistence and continued use of these technologies to “beautify” a female body even when she already reflects the ideal of beauty exposes the subjective desire to keep women attempting to achieve an “ideal” (and to keep them contributing to the economy through consumerism) that does not exist and will continually change over time. This sort of representation has a perceived “everything-and-nothing quality” because women will continue to do everything in their power and control to achieve that ideal.¹⁴⁷ Until that “I have it all” is reached, women will continue to believe that they have achieved nothing. Similarly, representation itself reflects this all-or-nothing mentality in the content or lack of content in images themselves. As mentioned in the previous chapters, ideologies are usually constructed in relation or opposition to an *other*. This *other* is “nothing” and the positive identity is “everything.” The female is constructed in opposition to the male, and thus feminine representations are harsher than masculine imagistic representations and it takes more effort to construct a positive and empowering feminine identity inside and outside of images.

While both genders are digitally modified, the photographic alterations of the female body are far more discussed in the public discourse, in interviews with celebrities, on gossip websites such as *Jezebel* and *Perez Hilton*, and in news publications like *The New York Times*. The issues at stake in these various debates are

the extent to which female bodies are being digitally manipulated and how that carries over to assumptions about the ideal female body and the true body of the celebrity. Debates often include a discussion about whether or not photo manipulation technologies should be so readily used, exposing the idea that “representation [itself] is the normative function of a language which is said either to reveal or distort what is assumed to be true.”¹⁴⁸ The assumption of truth is an important imagistic aspect of representation. When assumptions are made, societal attitudes instill connoted ideas about a manipulated denoted aspect of an image. There is no truth or evidentiary elements in photographs, there is no objectivity—and the assumption that images represent these truths furthers a wrongful assumption. When a female body is digitally altered, intellectually we know that it has been modified, but that does not change the way we view and receive the image, internalize its content, and compare ours own body to that photographed body. The assumptions we make are not in comparison to the before and after pictures, because we rarely see those, we assume based on what is invisible, what has been controlled for us without our knowledge or consent—therein lies the problem. The lack of transparency, the lack of specified knowledge is at the roots of a viewer’s wrongful interpretations. But what has been instilled cannot be undone, only bandaged.

Because there is little to no academic exploration of the impact that digital manipulation has on gender roles and representations, I will use an application of analytical tools and photographic theories in an attempt to theorize the technology’s uses and influence. I will look at the semiotics of pre/post-photo manipulated images to analyze the role the technology plays and how it addresses masculinity and

femininity. When these comparisons between gendered representations are seen, the viewer begins to understand where the differences in the treatment of gendered representations in digital photo manipulation lie. Before/After pictures of Photoshopped celebrities circulate around the Internet.



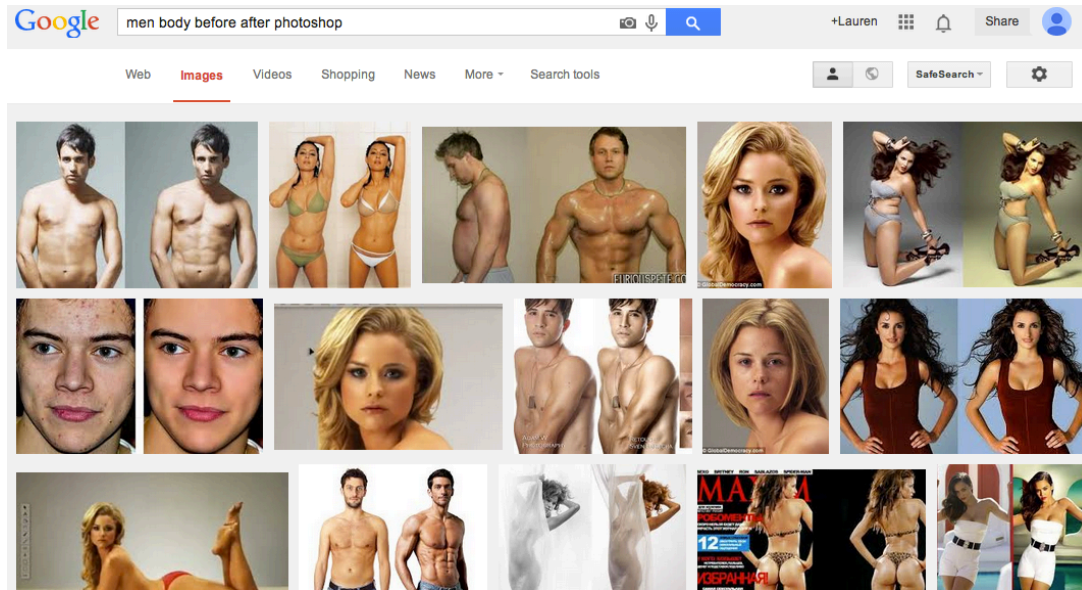
From these, we can see how digital manipulation denaturalizes all aspects of the female body so that the woman no longer looks natural, and we can see how it is used just even on men to enhance their positive features. This model's Before image is beautiful, she has freckles that many fair-skinned people have, her cheeks are slightly redder than the rest of her face, and you can see the depth in her eyes. In the After photo, all of those aspects that make her unique and, "normal," disappear: her skin tone is brightened, and evened out completely, her eyes look like they are floating on her faces, and you can't really tell where her lips begin or end. Her hair has been saturated and harshened. She no longer looks natural, or even human. She has become plasticized, made to look almost identical to a Barbie doll. The fact that digital manipulation is inherently telling women they need to look like dolls is evidenced of how far denaturalized these images have become. In contrast, a Before/After image of a man being digitally altered just looks like they put some makeup on him (turning his red face white) and erased his blemishes. He now looks

like an upstanding guy—almost as if as a viewer you can look straight into his eyes and understand his feelings. You could do that in the Before picture of the woman, but definitely not in the After photo.



In digitally altered images of the entire body, similar trends are at play. Jessica Alba, is a well-known female celebrities admired by both males and females alike for her impeccable body—she fits the thin waist, large breast, acceptably ethnic/honorary white ideal woman stereotype. As a celebrity who definitely does not need to be digitally altered, her Before photograph depicted her strong arms, muscularly defined thighs, large breasts, and overall thin body. Besides an overall lightening of the photo so that her face can be seen, digital modifications include a more defined cleavage, a erasure of the wrinkles in her romper—making it seem like her thighs are thinner than they are so as not to bunch her shorts, and a thinned waist—which probably means taking out some of her lower ribs. Her face is just something we take for granted in this image, but any changes that were made mirror a close up image of a woman’s face. These modifications denaturalize Jessica and transform her into an object—taking away her uniqueness and individuality. In contrast, when searching for male

pre/post digital manipulation images, there are very scant options—evidence of the invisibility of the masculine normativity. This cultural domination has real effects, and these lack of images reflect, “the process by which these relations of dominance and subordination are articulated” and the ways in which we don’t even recognize the masculine inconspicuousness.¹⁵²



If there were any Before/After digitally manipulated images of men, they were mostly related to Before/After weight loss program. The only image I found of somewhat significant image alterations had very minimal modifications past the lighting differences. The After image defines lines on the man’s chest so as to enhance and articulate the ideal man—strong, muscular, taut—by defining his pectoral muscles, his six-pack abs, and hip flexors. This minimal enhancement of an already good-looking man in comparison to the plasticization of the women shows how digital manipulation technologies are being used to dictate gender roles and representations.



154

Another aspect of gender differences is the use of the term beauty to explore the feminine, but a lack of a term to explore a masculine body. While beauty can theoretically be applied to men, it is usually a term that is used to describe [female] beauty just like the feminine is inherently white and clarified if otherwise. Beauty is feminine, but male beauty is masculine. When Naomi Wolf explores the “beauty myth,” when Wendy Chapkis discusses “beauty secrets,” and when society examines the role of the beauty industry, what is really being referred to is the status of women as commodity, as object, as *other*. A beautiful woman is subjective to each individual’s tastes and preferences. Yet, society attempts to normalize the definition to create one true, ideal beauty. This happens through, “a socially constructed normative standard, which supports a discourse of feminine oppression and male dominance.”¹⁵⁵ However, it’s not quite that simple; while beauty is a visible discourse of feminine oppression and an invisible discourse of masculine dominance, the relationship of feminine/masculine and oppression/dominance and its associations to the respective genders is not quite so cut and dry. Femininity and masculinity are not mutually exclusive binaries, nor are they static concepts, but in fact a multi-

dimensional gendered scale that incorporates various qualities that can be attributed to either “feminine” or “masculine” identities. A feminine body can include muscular, defined arms and is just as valid a female body as a 200-pound woman, who is just as feminine as a woman who does fit the “ideal.” There is no one definition and exemplification of masculine or feminine beauty; each body is unique, and each body can exist within both ideals.

As mentioned before, a woman’s identity and normatively success is directly correlated to her body—and the term “beauty” dictates that ideal. The Google image searches are also a way of normalizing beauty—because all their images are of white individuals who reflect the ideal representation of gender. The masculine ideal is not referred to as beauty; handsome maybe, but usually just the term body is thrown around. I have tried to avoid using the gendered term as much as possible in this work in order to situate men and women on an equal footing. While I could have argued that the term beauty should be redefined to incorporate the masculine, I deliberately chose a discussion of the body because I felt it more adequately represented the issues I wanted to explore. Beauty is a weighted term, its meaning shifts in cultural, social, and historical contexts, and its ambiguity does not convey the issues that confine women to their bodies.

This term plays into the lack of options women face when exploring their individuality, their identity, and self-expression. In order to be “beautiful” and “successful,” a woman must only look to her body—if it is skinny and white—to “make it.” Their personal identity and appearance blends into their professional one, and there is little room for difference, change, or growth. Men, on the other hand,

ideally should be muscularly toned and white to succeed, however there is a lot more flexibility. They have more options to have a multidimensional personal and/or professional identity, and those two identities do not have to be identical. Men have the choice, opportunity, success and power to develop their personal identity as separate from their bodily looks (as long as they are white) such as James Franco, Seth Rogen, George Clooney, and Brad Pitt have done. Women's must fit their bodies within the systematic ideology to be congruent with their outward identity, success, and power (whether white or of color), as is evidenced by current actors such as Scarlett Johansson, Kate Winslet, Keira Knightley, Beyoncé, Jennifer Lopez, and Jennifer Lawrence. All great actors in their own right, these women are minimized to their looks by being digitally denaturalized, objectified, commodified, and symbolized as a form of iconography. The lack of options for a feminine public persona, personal identity, and celebrity brand closes the already small gap between a woman's personal identity and professional identity—confining women to their bodies, creating the body as an object that symbolizes the whole.

¹³⁵ hooks, *The Oppositional Gaze*, 119.

¹³⁶ Savedoff, *Escaping Reality*, 212.

¹³⁷ Savedoff, *Escaping Reality*.

¹³⁸ Google.com "Scarlett Johansson"

¹³⁹ Google.com "Jennifer Lawrence"

¹⁴⁰ Google.com "Bradley Cooper"

¹⁴¹ Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 9.

¹⁴² Pultz, *Body and the Lens*, 60.

¹⁴³ Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 47.

¹⁴⁴ Bordo, *Unbearable Weight*, 204.

¹⁴⁵ Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 64.

¹⁴⁶ Bordo, "The Body and Reproduction of Femininity," in *Gender Body Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1989), 17.

¹⁴⁷ Dyer, *White*, 750.

¹⁴⁸ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 4.

¹⁴⁹ Barbie Image, <http://www.fanpop.com/clubs/barbie/images/31795185/title/barbie-wallpaper>

¹⁵⁰ <http://raids.com/single.php?id=1115>

¹⁵¹ <http://www.thecampanil.com/health-body-positivity-why-our-view-of-beauty-is-distorted/>

¹⁵² Hall, “Notes on Deconstructing the Popular,” in *Cultural Resistance Reader*, 189.

¹⁵³ Google.com

¹⁵⁴ <http://digitallybeautiful.blogspot.com/>

¹⁵⁵ Callaghan, *Ideals of Feminine Beauty Philosophical, Social, and Cultural Dimensions*, ix.

Afterword

This work intervenes at a critical juncture in the field of Media and Cultural Studies as there has been no previous academic work on photo manipulation practices. There has been a wealth of theorists exposing the ways in which images function within society, how they are received. Similarly, there are tons of works exploring the ways in which femininity is represented in the beauty industry and less more exploring the ways in which masculinity is represented. As a result, I pulled from multiple theorists across these concepts to compose how these theories apply and be extrapolated to image manipulation. Analysis of each theorist more extensively could be possible, but I chose to explore generally how photo manipulation practices can be situated within current discourse. Similarly, there were discourses that could have been expanded or situated more centrally in my work. Specifically, I originally wanted to dedicate an entire chapter to the ways that race is represented in images, but within the scope and timeframe of my work, this was not possible. There is a large section of academic work that underscores the ways in which women and male athletes are imagistically represented in more racially stereotyped ways that lead to certain normalized understandings that do not reflect “truth.” Additionally, a stronger foundation for voyeurism and spectatorship could be parsed out to create a better understanding of the ways photo manipulation culturally influences decisions, behaviors, and performativity. I also would have loved to further

situate commodity feminism within the realm of the beauty industry and photo manipulation.

Because of the limited scope of relevant existing theories, my work required a certain level of generality and lack of focus. As a result, my categorizations and analysis was regulated to popular ideologies, stereotypic representations, and I did not intend to limit or refuse to acknowledge all representations of women or men in these ways nor do I attempt to assume that all viewers react to these images in the ways I describe. I did not seek out to to undermine or disregard the individual by exploring normative cultural ideologies.

Bibliography

- Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. "We Should All Be Feminists," Ted.com.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hg3umXU_qWc.
- Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1980.
- Baudrillard, Jean. *The Conspiracy of Art*. New York: Semiotext(e), 2005.
- Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing*. London: Penguin Books, 1972.
- Bordo, Susan. "Braveheart, Babe, and the Contemporary Body." In *Enhancing Human Traits: Ethical and Social Implications*, edited by Erik Parens. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2000.
- . "The Body and Reproduction of Femininity." In *Gender Body Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1989.
- . *The Male Body*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999.
- . *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1999.
- Callaghan, Karen A. *Ideals of Feminine Beauty Philosophical, Social, and Cultural Dimensions*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994.
- Chapkis, Wendy. *Beauty Secrets Women and the Politics of Appearance*. Boston: South End Press, 1986.
- Davis, Kathy. *Reshaping the Female Body*. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- De Clercq, Eva. *The Seduction of the Female Body: Women's Rights in Need of a New*

- Body Politics*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Devoss, Daneille Nicole and Julie Platt. *Image Manipulation and Ethics in a Digital-Visual World*.
http://www2.bgsu.edu/departments/english/cconline/ethics_special_issue/DEVOS_S_PLATT/
- Dyer, Richard. *Heavenly Bodies*. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- . "White." In *Film and Theory: An Anthology*, edited by Robert Stam and Toby Miller. Malden: Blackwell, 2000.
- Fetveit, Arild. "Reality TV and the Digital Era: A Paradox in Visual Culture?." In *Reality Squared: Televisual Discourse on the Real*, edited by James Friedman. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002.
- Fey, Tina. *Bossypants*. New York: Little, Brown and, 2011.
- Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish*. New York: Random House, 1995.
- Gilman, Sander L. "Damaged Men: Thoughts on Kafka's Body." In *Constructing Masculinity*, edited by Maurice Berger, Brian Wallis and Simon Watson. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Goldman, Leslie. "Kate Winslet's Freakishly Long Legs." *iVillage*. N.p., 28 July 2010.
- Hall, Stuart. "Notes on Deconstructing the Popular." In *Cultural Resistance Reader*, edited by Stephen Duncombe. New York: Verso, 2002.
- "The History of Photoshop," Creative Bloq, last modified Dec. 13, 2005.
<http://www.creativebloq.com/adobe/history-photoshop-12052724>.
- hooks, bell. "Doing It For Daddy." In *Constructing Masculinity*, edited by Maurice Berger, Brian Wallis and Simon Watson. New York: Routledge, 1995.

-----, "The Oppositional Gaze." In *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Boston: South End Press, 1992.

Jenkins, Henry. *Convergence Culture*. New York: New York University Press, 2006.

Lacan, Jacques, H  lo  se Fink, and Bruce Fink. *Ecrits: The First Complete Edition in English*. New York: W.W. Norton &, 2006.

Mosse, George L. *The Image of Man*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Nixon, Sean. *Hard Looks Masculinities, Spectatorship and Contemporary Consumption*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996.

Nyong'o, Lupita. *Essence* 7th Annual Black Women in Hollywood.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZPCkfARH2eE#t=200>.

Pultz, John. *Body and the Lens: Photography 1839 to the Present*. New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc., 1995.

Savedoff, Barbara E. "Escaping Reality: Digital Imagery and the Resources of Photography." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 55, no. 2 (1997): 201-214.

-----, *Transforming Images How Photography Complicates the Picture*. New York: Cornell University Press, 2000.

Sontag, Susan. *On Photography*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977.

Stone, Abbey. "Jennifer Lawrence Talks About her Weight, Again," *Hollywood*. Last modified November 9, 2012.

<http://www.hollywood.com/news/celebrities/43959185/jennifer-lawrence-talks-about-her-weight-again?page=all>.

Sturken, Marita and Lisa Cartwright. *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual*

- Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Tavris, Carol. *The Mismeasure of Woman*. New York: Touchstone, 1992.
- Valentine, Catherine. "Female Bodily Perfection and the Divided Self." In *Ideals of Feminine Beauty Philosophical, Social, and Cultural Dimensions*, edited by Karen A. Callaghan. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994.
- Wheeler, Thomas H. *Phototruth or Photofiction? Ethics and Media Imagery in the Digital Age*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2002.
- Wolf, Naomi. *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used against Women*. New York: W. Morrow, 1991.
- Yapalater, Lauren. BuzzFeed.com, March 4, 2014.
- <http://www.buzzfeed.com/lyapalater/why-it-doesnt-really-matter-at-all-that-leonardo-dicaprio-di>.
- Yarrow, Simon. "Masculinity as a World Historical Category." In *What is Masculinity? Historical Dynamics from Antiquity to the Contemporary World*, edited by John H. Arnold and Sean Brady. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- "12 Famous MEN Before & After Photoshop," Cosmopolitan.
- <http://www.cosmopolitan.com/celebrity/exclusive/male-celebs-photoshopped#slide-1>.